

# THE ROMANCE OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS



MORSE  
LECTURE,  
1910



REV. S. S. HENSHAW



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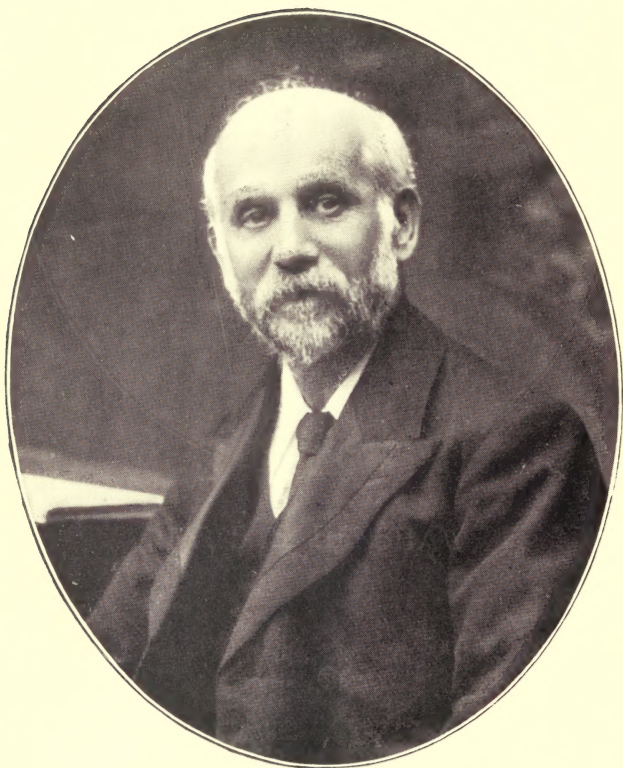












REV. S. S. HENSHAW.

# THE ROMANCE OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

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A Brief, Centenary Narrative of the Origin,  
History, and Wonderful Progress, of the  
Sunday Schools of the Primitive Methodist  
Church.

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MORSE LECTURE, 1910.

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BY  
Rev. S. S. HENSHAW.

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EMMANUEL

TO THE MEMORY OF

MY WIFE,

WHO WAS SCHOLAR AND TEACHER IN OLD FLAG LANE SUNDAY SCHOOL, SUNDERLAND; FOR THIRTY-THREE YEARS MY FAITHFUL COMPANION AND HELPER IN THE MINISTRY, RENDERING QUIET, EFFECTIVE SERVICE IN ALL THE CIRCUITS WHERE WE TRAVELLED; KIND, TRUE AND MIRTHFUL OF HEART, MAKING THE HOME BRIGHT AND ATTRACTIVE BY HER PRESENCE, HAPPY AS A QUEEN WITH HER CHILDREN ABOUT HER, FOR WHOSE WELFARE SHE LIVED AND PRAYED; OPENING TO ME BY HER BRAVE SELF-SACRIFICING SPIRIT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE WIDER MINISTRY I WAS CALLED TO EXERCISE, IN THE YEARS 1902-1907, AS THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.



## PREFACE.

PERHAPS a brief word of preface may be necessary. The following pages contain the second Morse Lecture. The substance of it was delivered at the eighth Triennial Sunday School Conference on Saturday, October 8th, 1910, Central Church, Derby. The author is conscious that the little work carries with it the evidence of many defects. He would like his readers to judge him mercifully. The Lecture has been completed and passed through the press in the busy year of his Presidency. It should also be remembered that he has no predecessor in the line he has taken. The Lecture represents the first attempt of any sort to tell the story of our Sunday Schools, and the difficulty of gathering the material has been very great. The title given to the Lecture has been chosen, because it appears to be the truest and the best. One of our popular writers has said, in justifying the title of *Romance* to one of his books, "The incidents and characters described are all romantic." With but little modification, the statement may be adopted as descriptive of the story here told. The romance of the realities of the religious world is unfolded by our narrative. The author desires to express his grateful acknowledgments to a number of friends, and to the authorities of our Publishing House for their kindness in loaning to him old magazines and documents, to the General Sunday School Committee for access to its Minute Books and Records, and to his good colleagues, the Revs. A. Vickers and H. Smith, for their valuable service in helping to correct the proof-sheets.

THE AUTHOR.

NOTTINGHAM,

*April, 1911.*

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&C., &C.

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## BOOK I.

# FORMATIVE PERIODS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### IN THE BEGINNING.

Beginning of Sunday School Movement—Robert Raikes—Sad Lot of the Children—Lack of Education—The High and Mighty—The Three R's in the Sunday School—Sunday Schools Established for Worst Classes of Children—Forerunner of National Education—Our First Sunday School: Its Place in our History—James Steele, its First Superintendent—How it came to be—Its Temporary Dwelling—Its Final Home—A Happy Incident.

**W**HEN our Church started on its remarkable career, at the end of the first decade of the last century, the Sunday School Movement was still in its infancy. Amid manifold and powerful oppositions it was attempting to struggle into life and to gain a foothold as a permanent institution in the world. Robert Raikes, whose genius, by the grace of God, had created it, was yet living, and with his mature wisdom, sagacity, and strength, was working with all his might in its behalf. He was busy going up and down the country expounding its ideals, and advocating its claims. It was not until one and twenty years after, that he passed away to the high recompence of his reward.

The lot of the children was at that time a terribly sad one. The children of the poor were clothed in rags and often nurtured in crime. Neither State, nor Church, nor parents took much interest in them, or gave them any real,

kindly consideration and care. They were cruelly and barbarously treated, allowed to grow up in ignorance, lewdness, and sin.

Education was backward; indeed, for the children of the poor it did not exist. For them there was no education at all, and the leading spirits of fashionable society and of ecclesiastical tweedledum held that it would be dangerous to educate them in the least degree. Knowledge was not for the common people. It was the exclusive heritage and prerogative of the few select souls who lived at the top, and plundered and oppressed those who lived at the bottom. Give them knowledge, and they would become too proud to occupy their proper stations in life, and would cease to pay deference to their "betters." That was the doctrine taught down to our own day. We are not sure that it is quite exploded even now in some "high and dry" quarters of the land.

It was this lamentable lack of the elements of ordinary education and the utter absence of any provision to supply the lack, that explains one of the main features of our early Sunday Schools in common with practically all Sunday Schools. While the moral and religious training of the pupils was the supreme purpose, it was nevertheless sought to inform the mind, and develop the intellect, to teach them the arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The three R's were the rule in many schools, the first two held sway in most. Teaching the children to read was, of course, an absolute necessity that they might have direct access to the Word of God and secure an acquaintance with the glorious story of the Gospel of Christ. Writing was an accomplishment so desirable that the philanthropic instincts of good men made them anxious to afford such facilities as they could for its attainment.



Now the Sunday School was originally established, the reader will remember, for the benefit of the worst classes of children; for the waifs and strays of the city street; for the little urchins and ragamuffins who ran wild and loose; for the lowest, the poorest, the most neglected, helpless and miserable of the juvenile population. And it was certainly among this class that Primitive Methodist schools were called to work; it was this class they were intended to enlighten, guide, comfort and bless. In them were gathered children from the wretched homes of the overwrought toilers, who, too frequently were awfully degraded and dissolute—the children of agricultural labourers, miners, cotton spinners, weavers, fishermen, and coal-heavers. And in these schools hundreds and thousands of men received the only education they ever had, and by means of it, and the Christian character they formed, and the spiritual stimulus they acquired, they rose in not a few instances to positions of usefulness and power, while some passed to distinction and fame in the commerce, the councils, the statesmanship of the nation, the empire, the world.

The Sunday School was the forerunner of the national system of education that flourishes to-day. Between it and the week-day school as we know it and have known it for forty years, there is an intimate connection. The one was the indirect, if not the immediate cause of the other. It pioneered and prepared the way; it set the example, laid the foundation; it spread the sentiment and created the public conviction and opinion that resulted in the Acts of Parliament that finally fixed up for us the admirable and popularly elected and managed Board Schools.

Singularly enough our first Sunday School had much to do with the origin and establishment of our Church. Strange as that may sound, it is perfectly and literally true. Our

modern historians do not appear to have apprehended the significance of this fact. They do not appear to have apprehended the fact itself. We must hark back to the account of Hugh Bourne to see the important place the school filled and the marvellous effect it produced in that chapter of providential circumstances which gave Primitive Methodism its birth, shape and destiny. When William Clowes was expelled from the Methodist Church, old Joseph Smith, a loyal Methodist and an ardent admirer of the fiery evangelist, opened his kitchen on Friday evenings for preaching services. Mr. Smith, who was fairly well off, had a relative named James Steele, who acted as the steward of his property, and relieved him of anxiety in the administration of his affairs. Steele pretty regularly attended the kitchen worship. He was a man of considerable ability, influence, strength, and skill. He is depicted by his contemporaries as one born to command. His portraits certainly show a face adorned with a striking and most pronouncedly Wellingtonian nose. Even the great Duke himself could hardly rival him in this particular. Had he been in the army he might have risen to the rank of general, and have won his Waterloo. In the Methodist Church of Tunstall he was conspicuous for his piety, usefulness, energy, and devotion. He was Local Preacher, Leader of two classes, Chapel Steward, and Superintendent of Sunday School. He was a man of repute in the neighbourhood, held in esteem and reverence for his worth and his works' sake. His sympathy with the kitchen services was a sin the Methodist authorities could not tolerate. They visited it with swift and severe penalties. They suddenly cut him adrift from the Church he loved, and of which he was such an ornament.

The Sunday School over which he presided was a large one. He had been its superintendent for twelve years, and

as the School was not strictly a Methodist School, the majority of the teachers not belonging to the Methodist Society, he did not dream that his relations with it would be disturbed. But on the following Sunday morning, as he was engaged in the duties of his office, a trustee entered the school and discharged him from taking any further part in the proceedings of the place. It was a big blow to him, but he bore it bravely and meekly. As he left the premises, however, the greater portion of the teachers and scholars followed him. He advised them to return, select another superintendent, and go on with the School as usual. They stoutly refused. Their affection for their faithful guide and friend constrained them to cling to him. The situation that had thus unexpectedly arisen was difficult and perplexing. Here was a school without a home. The way was soon made plain and clear. An effectual door was opened through which this little flock in the wilderness passed to deliverance and entered into quiet pastures.

Mr. John Boden placed at their disposal a large room, built to store earthenware, which at the moment was unused and empty. Books and seats were hurriedly provided, and on Sunday, April 28th, 1811, our first Sunday School met in triumph and gladness in that large room. No sooner had the School got settled than the room where it met was also made the headquarters for preaching the evangel, which had hitherto been proclaimed on Friday evenings in Mr. Smith's kitchen by Willaim Clowes and a band of like-minded men. The kitchen was abandoned for the warehouse, and regular Sunday services were at once inaugurated. Scholars and converts multiplied, the cause prospered and advanced. Shortly two things faced the growing community :—(1) The large room was too small for the Sunday School. "Rather too small" is Bourne's timorous description of the crisis.

(2) It was only a temporary arrangement; the room could not long be retained. The necessities of the case inspired prompt and diligent action. A momentous decision was taken, land secured, a building erected, and mark the statement of the old narrative, "*a building erected for the school and preaching.*"

The building was not a model of ecclesiastical architecture. It would not have passed muster with Sir Christopher Wren, but it amply satisfied the æsthetic tastes of Hugh Bourne and his fellow labourers. They were proud of it. The bare, barnic, quaker-like structure kindled their admiration. Here is Bourne's description of it and how they regarded it: "It was sixteen yards long by eight wide, and galleried half-way. It was finished in a plain manner, the walls were not coated, and it had no ceiling. It was much approved of, on account of its plainness and neat appearance. In the erection of it, the house form was chosen in preference to the chapel form, so that, if not wanted, it would just form four houses, according to the plan on which houses are usually built at Tunstall. This cautious method was made use of because it could not be known whether or not the Connexion would be of any long continuance." That was the first Primitive Methodist Chapel, the home of the first Primitive Methodist Sunday School, and we think the facts warrant the conclusion that this School was an essential and potent instrument in the founding of our Church. It forced the pace, led to the adoption of public Sunday services at Tunstall, and finally to an aggressive policy that provided for both School and services an independent and abiding centre. That first Chapel, though plain and unorthodox in style, and reared in doubt and fear and trembling, symbolised the reality and permanence of the movement that has covered this land with over five thousand active religious communi-

ties, and in the sweep of its power has encircled and enriched the whole earth.

Perhaps we may be permitted to record an incident here which shows that any feelings of bitterness and estrangement that might have been engendered in the hearts of either local Wesleyans or Primitives by the events which resulted in the creation of the Primitive Methodist Church and its first Sunday School speedily faded away and died out. On August 16th, 1818, the Wesleyan Chapel, Tunstall, was placed at the disposal of the Primitives for the purposes of their Sunday School sermons, the preacher on the occasion being the famous Lorenzo Dow, of America. The generosity of "the friends of the old Methodist Connexion," as the Wesleyans were styled on the bill announcing the anniversary, in offering the use of their Chapel, by which a more numerous congregation might be accommodated, was greatly appreciated by our people, and made an excellent impression upon the whole community.

## CHAPTER II.

### ANOTHER STEP FORWARD.

Hugh Bourne Interested in Sunday Schools before Primitive Methodism Appeared—He Wrote a Sunday School Catechism—Appointed to Establish Sunday Schools—Boyleston—A Superintendent Wanted—The Only Possible Man Refused—Struggle—Victory—School Opened—Which was our First Sunday School after all?—The Case Argued.

WHEN our Church sprang into existence Hugh Bourne was by no means a stranger to Sunday School work. It had been his delight to devote himself to it. His love of the children early drew him into it. It is probable that he started a Sunday School in Harriseahead New Wesleyan Chapel—a chapel that he built, by the by, entirely at his own cost—so far back as the year 1802. Whether he started the School is not certain, but he was busy teaching in it, and when Norton Chapel was built in 1805 one of his biographers, Mr. John Walford, says that “he had a principal hand in commencing a Sunday School in connection with it.” That he took a deep and lively interest in both these Schools is evident. This interest is shown in services of the most valuable and painstaking kind. Not only did he take part in founding and conducting them, but he prepared a considerable *Catechism* for them. It received the somewhat pretentious title of “The Great Scripture Catechism.” It stated that it was compiled for Norton and Harriseahead Sunday Schools, and intended for all Sunday Schools in general. Part First of this Catechism was issued in the early spring of 1807. It is addressed from Bemersley and bears the date, April 27th, 1807. It extends to sixty



questions and answers. The answers are invariably given in the language of the Bible. It has the excellence of simplicity, and it is fairly comprehensive. It is, as might be expected, intensely evangelical. Beginning with the Creation, the author soon threads his way through the mysteries of the material worlds to the presence of Christ, and around His august personality, teaching, work and cross the whole composition revolves. They are the themes with which it treats.

It is not surprising in view of these things to find that the Quarterly Meeting of the Tunstall Circuit, the only Circuit in the Connexion at that time, had appointed him "to the care of establishing Sunday Schools wherever they were wanted." Most likely this appointment was made at his own suggestion, which grew out of his anxiety for the welfare of the young. This bishop and shepherd of the little children soon found scope for his organising ability in this direction, for with loving zeal he pursued the task to which he had been set—more properly, to which he had set himself.

The first sphere of his labours in regard to this new adventure was in the little Derbyshire village of Boyleston. He carefully laid his plans and prepared the ground. To start hurriedly and haphazardly would, he knew, be to court defeat. He visited all the houses of the poor people in the village to ascertain the number of children that would be likely to attend. He interviewed and secured the sympathy of persons likely to make teachers. And then his enterprise seemed to be threatened with failure; children were available, teachers could be commanded, but the School would require a superintendent, and he could not find one. There was only one man who was capable of filling the position—Thomas Morecroft, a gentleman farmer of the place—and he declined it. Morecroft had been converted in his own home

during a visit paid to him by Bourne, Clowes and others, and between Bourne and him there had grown up the most intimate and affectionate acquaintance. They were as brothers—as David and Jonathan. For three hours Hugh Bourne tried to induce him to place himself at the head of the movement, using every argument he knew and every means he could devise, but without success. The man was obdurate; he urged a variety of objections, chief of which were the pressing duties of the farm and lack of proper abilities. He promised to advance money to purchase books and to see that the equipment required should be provided; beyond that he would not go.

Bourne retired that night with a heavy heart, a bitterly disappointed and distressed man. Through sheer weariness and sorrow he was soon asleep, but presently he awoke and passed the hours in prayer. As he prayed a holy calm and confidence fell upon his troubled spirit. He received the comforting assurance that the Lord had appointed his friend to the office he desired him to fill. In a moment his anxiety and worry vanished as by magic, and he went downstairs in quiet triumph and happy expectancy. In the meantime the conviction had been borne in upon Morecroft's mind that he must undertake the position that was awaiting him, or disaster would sweep his farm, God would strip him of his cattle. When the two men met in the early morning, not a word of argument or persuasion was spoken; no such word was needed as the matter was settled. Farmer Morecroft undertook the charge of the School, which was opened February 27th, 1814, with forty-one scholars, Hugh Bourne being present and taking part. Mr. Morecroft proved a capable and faithful superintendent, remaining at his post down to the day of his death, and the School prospered under his care.

And so another step forward was taken and the second School was established nearly three years after the first. Simple, natural, and inevitable as all this seems, we are nevertheless confronted with the claim set forth by high authority that Boyleston School was the first in Primitive Methodism. Mr. Kendall, in his great work on the origin and history of our Church, says that it was probably the first. In the new history of Methodism it is distinctly stated by him to have been the first. No grounds are given for thus totally ignoring the Tunstall School, but pushing the inquiry a little further back we discover that a reason is assigned for this rather remarkable attitude. The Rev. W. Antliff, D.D., in his "Life of H. Bourne," chronicling the establishment of the Boyleston School, remarks:—"We believe the first formed in the Connexion; for," he adds, "the one at Tunstall was transferred from the Wesleyans when Mr. Steele was expelled." That is curious, and not very logical, we venture to think. For the purposes of our present argument it is a matter of little consequence whence the School came, or from whom it was "transferred"; it was formed, taught, managed and supported by the pioneers of Primitive Methodism. After a few months' temporary shelter in the hospitable room of Mr. Boden, it was finally housed in the first Primitive Methodist Chapel. The School continued to exist, and has continued to exist down to our own time. For some years after its advent on the scene, there was no other Sunday School in Primitive Methodism. These are the facts of the case. They are admitted, and they are indisputable, and they make obvious the point of our contention, that it was our first Sunday School. It was as much the first Primitive Methodist Sunday School as the building in which it met was the first Primitive Methodist Chapel.

## CHAPTER III.

# THE GROWTH OF SCHOOLS.

Prophecy of Greater Things—A Group of Schools Founded—Schools Grow with Growth of Church—False Conceptions of Youth—Ignorance of Christ's Teaching and Attitude—Schools Spring up in Track of Revival—First Statistical Reports—Good Effects—Pioneers of Sunday Schools—Societies without Schools Threatened with Extinction.

**T**RACE back the mighty river to its source, and you are surprised by its insignificant appearance. As the water in some little marshy spot comes oozing out of the ground, or bubbling up in a spring, or trickling down from the rock, a little child can easily stride across the stream. But the tiny rill gathers volume and force as it rolls along in its course, until in deep, broad, majestic currents it goes sweeping towards the sea. We have just glanced at the commencement of our wonderful Sunday School system. It is the day of small things, but the small things contain the prophecy and the promise of the greater things to come. Tunstall and Boyleston were the first-fruits of a glorious harvest in this department of our church work. They were starting points from which the captains and soldiers of our denominational army marched to wide and magnificent victories. As soon as Boyleston was fairly on its way, H. Bourne passed to other villages near, repeating the same process and achieving the same results. In the first half of 1814 a group of schools had been created in Derbyshire at places more or less obscure and whose names do not figure prominently on ordinary maps, viz., Abbots

Bromley, Rocester, Hulland, Mercaston, and Weston-under-Wood, and this group was followed by other groups as the cause extended and preaching places multiplied.

With the larger growth of the Church in the twenties and on through the following decades came also the larger growth of the Sunday School movement. Indeed very early it became the rule to establish a School wherever possible at every place where services were held. This was not always done, of course; a good deal depended upon local leaders and people, and occasionally these local leaders and people lacked initiative, or they lacked perhaps the intelligence that was necessary for the work, or possibly they lacked real and lively interest in the young themselves, and did not see the good of making "a fuss about them," as some of our modern critics and antiquarians would say. The old mischievous notion of youth sowing its wild oats figured conspicuously in the popular conceptions of that day. It appeared to be a fixed belief in many minds that it was somehow or another a natural and necessary principle, and that only after a period of loose and dissolute conduct could the serious and sober elements of life and character be expected to assert themselves. Even where this terrible delusion did not hold sway, there was often wanting a proper appraisement of the value of young life, of the place of the child in the kingdom of heaven, of the gracious and gentle attitude of the Good Shepherd towards the lambs of the flock, of His insistence that they should be fed, and that it was not the will of the Heavenly Father that one of them should perish. There were people who would have gone miles to persuade a notorious poacher, or a wretched old drunkard to forsake his foolish habit and seek the better life, who would not stir a foot or take the slightest trouble to instruct in the ways of virtue and in the gospel



of divine love and grace the boys and girls who swarmed around them.

But as the revival represented by our Church spread throughout the land, and as Circuits increased and Chapels were erected, Schools sprang up here, there and everywhere. Yes, everywhere. East and west, north and south, they followed in the track of the revival. Hugh Bourne was behind the movement, pushing it on, urging and encouraging the people to adopt it, and loyally rendering them the help they needed. Our early magazines are a triumphant record of Schools established in all parts of the country where Primitive Methodism had penetrated. For many years we have no means of gauging the rate of progress; information on the subject is not available. The number of Sunday School teachers and scholars was reported for the first time in 1838, and then there were 9,801 teachers and 53,188 scholars. By 1840 the teachers had risen to 11,968, and the scholars to 60,508. The next ten years witnessed an immense advance, for in 1850 there were 20,114 teachers and 103,310 scholars, an increase of 8,146 teachers and of 42,802 scholars. These statistics show how vigorously the policy of caring for the children was being pursued. In twelve years the number of teachers was more than doubled, and the scholars nearly doubled.

The universal testimony was that the School helped to strengthen, increase, and consolidate the Society, to extend its influence and give it favour with the people. It brought many parents into touch and sympathy with the Church. They were impressed with the marked improvements made in the minds, the manners, and behaviour of their children. The children became more manageable at home and more susceptible to reason, advice and counsel; and parents who had been indifferent to the moral and religious interests of



their children grew anxious that the excellent changes they witnessed in them should be abiding. There was awakened in them a sense of their own obligation and shame, and in not a few instances a resolve to strive by the help of God to do their duty. The labours of the School often won for us the respect and good will of well-to-do members of other Churches, and of enlightened members of the general community who belonged to no Church at all.

Our Schools were frequently the first in a town or neighbourhood. We were the pioneers of the Sunday School movement in many districts in England. In hundreds of cases the institution was introduced by us, and the opposition incident to all innovation, however beneficent, had to be encountered. Sometimes the opposition came from those who ought to have known better, and who were specially set and paid by the State to guard, expound, and encourage the claims of religion in the parish. Their objections, though unreasonable, frivolous and selfish, were urged with bitterness and vehemence; they acted with the zeal of fanatics. But our people, under trying circumstances, displayed genuine courage. They bore bravely the banner of the children's cause in the teeth of the storm; they carried it to triumph through the battles that raged fiercely around them.

The men of insight and observation discovered that the Societies that failed to notice and nurture the young were apt to become feeble and to be threatened with extinction. Their fate was used as a warning, and the cry was raised louder and louder to care for the children.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY.

Difficulty of Finding Suitable Places for Schools—Queer Spots—Three Stories—Arrangement for Simultaneous Singing—Difficulty of Obtaining Competent Teachers Acute, Universal—Raikes and Remuneration—Method Rejected—Example of Wesleyans—Voluntaryism Accepted—Real Solution—Cost of Outfit and Maintenance—Dear Books—Gifts of Wealthy—Prayer Books—Sectarian Bigotry—The Clergy—A Free Primitive Day School—Little Pariahs—Our Claim.

THERE were almost insuperable difficulties to be encountered in the early days and years of our existence as a Church in the way of establishing and sustaining Sunday Schools.

1. There was the difficulty of securing a suitable place in which to meet. Indeed the question of a place being *suitable* scarcely ever arose, if a place of any sort into which human beings could be put was at all available. The Primitives were poor, and they had few friends, particularly among the rich and the mighty, and those who could afford help. Openings for Schools were abundant, found on every hand, but the opportunities for entering them came slowly sometimes, though the need was clearly perceived and deeply felt. In town and country the problem of accommodation pressed, and it was a problem not always capable of easy or hurried solution. When the accommodation was found it was generally of a limited and homely kind, or of a rough and ready order. But in those days they were not very fastidious; comfort and attractiveness did not receive much attention, they were minor points of the programme. If a

shelter for the school could be secured where good work might be done, that was the supreme consideration; conditions might be cramped, awkward, a little insanitary, perfectly wretched, but they could be tolerated, and endured in the hope that the joy of the Lord and the gain of godliness would come to the hearts of the children. Besides there was always the prospect that something better might turn up, and it was wonderful how in most mysterious ways something better did turn up again, and again, and again, answering the prayers, honouring the faith, rewarding the industry, and cheering the spirits of the lowly toilers.

It was quite customary for the School to begin in a private house; in the labourer's cottage, the miner's home, or the farmer's kitchen. A disused workshop or an old store would be utilised; a battered shed or broken down shanty at the colliery or the ironworks, the hay loft over a stable, the clubroom of a public-house, the cellar of a warehouse, or the top storey of a factory. Anniversaries were celebrated in the open air. As friends and funds increased, a tent would be provided, a spacious marquee hired. In many places barns would be rigged up and fitted out in grand style for such state occasions. The writer's first Sunday School was in one of the cottages of a long colliery row, the second a similar cottage with inner walls and bedroom floors removed and dignified by the name of the band-room, from the fact that it had been formerly used for the training and practices of a brass band. In the latter case the annual School sermons were held in the sheds of a brickyard, trimmed up and made to look as tidy and respectable as possible.

Some of the situations resulting from the character and arrangements of the buildings in the old time strike us as comical and amusing to-day; they provoke a smile. Viewed

from the standpoint of the twentieth century they are rather laughable perhaps; all the same they were then regarded seriously enough, nobody thought of smiling or laughing, and they show the difficulties under which the work was done. Take this picture from the pen of a minister in the *Sunday School Journal and Teachers' Magazine* for June, 1905: "In the street where I was born was a three-storied Primitive Methodist Sabbath School dating from the year 1821, and which stood five minutes' walk from the Chapel. In its general architectural appearance it resembled a huge silk mill. Shortly after it was opened, and when Sunday Schools were fewer in the old borough than they are to-day, it is said to have had a regular attendance of a thousand scholars. The infants were taught on the ground floor, which was paved with red bricks, the girls in the middle or second room, and the boys in the upper storey. By a novel arrangement the opening and closing hymns were sung simultaneously by the young people in the three departments. The superintendent stood in the centre of the middle room close by a huge trap-door, which communicated with the infants' department, in the ceiling above him, a similar opening giving access to the upper room. At these two points of vantage, his assistants stood. When he announced the number of the hymn they re-announced it in their respective rooms; at a pre-arranged signal the scholars in three distinct rooms started the hymn, and as far as possible, sung harmoniously together."

2. Another prime difficulty was that of obtaining competent teachers. It is spoken of as a difficulty now in some schools. If that be so at the beginning of the twentieth century, what must it have been at the beginning of the nineteenth? The difficulty was acute, chronic, and almost universal. There was the work waiting to be done; to get persons capable

of doing it was not seldom impossible. However willing people might be, they were as a rule unable to undertake the task; they had not the educational fitness for it. Thousands and thousands among our first converts could neither read nor write. They had not had the advantage of a day's or an hour's schooling in their lives, and until the intellect had been awakened by their acceptance of religion, their mental powers had lain dormant and they had not felt the need of using and developing them. This difficulty was realised all round in Sunday School work, and had handicapped the movement from the start. To provide eligible persons for the labour, Raikes had offered the inducement of remuneration—he paid them.

For two reasons the Primitive Methodists did not accept this solution of the difficulty. First, because they could not. They had no resources; money was a scarce commodity. There were no rich people among them, and few who were at all well-to-do. Primitive Methodism could then say, as Peter said to the cripple at the beautiful gate of the Temple, "Silver and gold have I none." In the matter of poverty, as well as in the matter of faith, courage, heroism, self-sacrifice, service, they were in the apostolic succession. Second: Even if they could have paid teachers, they would not; they believed in the voluntary system. The Wesleyans strongly disapproved of paying teachers, and our people followed them in what they held to be an excellent example. They were extolled by Hugh Bourne for introducing it. In a lecture on Sunday Schools, he states that Raikes' system was not calculated for great and extensive usefulness, as he only employed hired teachers. Then having asserted that the Dissenters took up this system and raised much money to pay teachers, he continues, "But the Wesleyan Methodists of those days would have thought



themselves guilty of Sabbath breaking had they taken pay for teaching children on Sundays. So by degrees these noble-minded people opened out a new system, a system of gratuitous teaching, and this system has risen like the sun in its strength. It has been a blessing to thousands and ten thousands. It has assisted in peopling heaven, and has approved itself to be one of the great means to bring in the latter day glory." After that eulogy it will be seen at once where his sympathies lay, and in this he was no doubt the spokesman of the denomination. For many years in the Annual Report our teachers were described as "gratuitous" teachers as an indication of the voluntary character of their work. But as our people did not "hire" teachers, the range of choice was restricted in a large degree to the ranks of those who were unfurnished with the necessary equipment and experience. The teachers had to be taught before they could teach, and the difficulty of obtaining a good, reliable supply of teachers was not satisfactorily settled until the schools had been in operation sufficiently long to raise their own staff.

3. The cost of the outfit and maintenance of the schools was a serious obstacle. It was a heavy tax upon the Societies, for then books and appliances were scarce and dear. The lowest price for a Bible in 1825 was 3s. 9d., and for a Testament, 1s. 3d. It was only very slowly that the price was lowered step by step until in the course of years, when Bibles had been reduced to eighteen pence and Testament to sixpence each, it was thought they were remarkably cheap. But even in 1841 Byker Hill School, Newcastle-on-Tyne, was embarrassed and bankrupt by the sudden rise in the price of Testaments from sixpence to fifteen pence, and they had to devise special means of relief to make an appeal to the charitable. Because

of their dearness it was a long time before the Scriptures rose to the supreme place they occupy in the School to-day. Naturally approach was made to wealthy people for assistance, and not always in vain, although the gifts of some of these aristocratic, Established Church patrons were sometimes a little peculiar, and did not seem very appropriate considering they were bestowed upon Dissenters. His Grace the Duke of Devonshire, for instance, made a present to a small school at Houghton, near Bolsover, Derbyshire, through the hand of his steward, of twenty Bibles and twenty *Prayer Books*. Probably his Grace thought the *Prayer Books* as indispensable as the Bibles. Anyhow the recipients were grateful to his Grace, and they paid tribute to the value of his gift, for their Bibles and *Prayer Books* they declared "were found to be exceedingly useful, and for them they were abundantly thankful."

4. Sectarian bigotry menaced and hampered our Schools. Up to 1870 education was largely in the hands of the State Church, and petty persecutions and tyrannical methods were adopted by the parsons and their friends to block our way, hinder our work, and rob us of our children and the legitimate fruit of our labour. In innumerable instances they denied our children the privilege of attending the Day School unless they attended their Sunday School. Such an unreasonable and insulting attitude was not always regarded with meekness and submission. It was resented and resisted by the stout-hearted adherents of our cause. It provoked noble defiance and manly revolt. At Boyleston in 1844 the clergyman of the parish refused to have at the National School those children who attended the Primitive Methodist Sunday School. "Very well," said the Primitives of the village, "then we'll start a day school of our own." And they were as good as their word. Miss Elizabeth Smith, of Derby,



was engaged as mistress. £15 per annum was guaranteed by two or three friends. She accepted this sum as salary, and it was supplemented by gifts in kind from appreciative parents. They anticipated free education by starting a free school. Such bold strokes for freedom as that struck by these poor Primitive Methodist villagers have helped to dash to pieces the yoke that arrogant priests and their partisan supporters have attempted to fasten upon the neck of the British nation.

The clerics have treated our children like little pariahs. When they dare not or could not exclude them from the Day School, they have boycotted them, refused them permission to attend its annual treats, or to contend for the prizes, or to share the honours of the School. They have taught our children the wickedness of dissent, and warned them of the peril, the frightful consequences in this life and the life to come of attending the Dissenting Chapel. They have held up to ridicule and misrepresentation our ministers and our worship. This priestly narrowness and intolerance persists. In his evidence before the Royal Commission on Education in 1886, the Secretary of our Sunday School Union at that time, the late Rev. T. Whittaker, gave the names of seventeen English counties from which complaints of the injustices and hardships imposed upon our children had officially reached him. These counties included not only Tory-ridden counties in the South, but also such democratic and advanced counties as Durham and Northumberland. There are nearly eight thousand single school areas in rural England—where the solitary school for the most part is Anglican—and in these areas to-day, under Mr. Balfour's Education Bill of 1902, the condition of things we have described, to no small extent, still flourishes; and our young people who aspire to the teaching profession or who enter

it are under grievous disabilities as the penalty for being loyal to the faith of their fathers. A just, purely national and unsectarian system of education in Elementary and Secondary Schools, Training Colleges, and Universities would be an infinite boon and advantage to our children and Church. As citizens we have a right to claim it and to expect it. We will back our claim and expectation with all our energy; we will urge forward the fight for it until at last we win the victory and save our country from the charge of partiality and injustice that at present rests upon her laws.

## CHAPTER V.

### HOW SUCCESS WAS SECURED.

Quiet Methods—Shefford and Mrs. Ride—Missions held to Establish Schools—Mission Schools Established—King's Lynn—School Anniversaries—Their Popularity and Power—Week Evening Schools an Auxiliary—School Feast a Factor in School Propaganda—Hendringham—King's Lynn—No Games—Why?—Not a Dull Affair.

NOTWITHSTANDING the numerous disadvantages and hindrances against which our people had to contend, they forged ahead. Their own unfavourable circumstances and the bitter and ruthless opposition that confronted them did not, could not, keep them back. Their ardent, eager souls pressed restlessly forward towards the prize. With leaders alert, courageous, wise and skilful they advanced from one goal of Christian usefulness and power to another; each success was made a vantage ground from which they gained other successes.

By quiet, patient, persevering effort they often either overcame or baffled the enemy. Take this illustration. Shefford, a village in Berkshire, gave a name to one of the largest Circuits in the Connexion. In 1836 the famous John Ride was the superintendent minister. His wife was anxious for a school, but on account of opposition, the providential way was not thought to be open. Hugh Bourne, in making a visit to the West of England in September, 1836, to re-open the Chapel at Frome, called at Shefford. Counsel was taken with him and arrangements made for a school. By his advice it was decided to institute it expressly for the children of Primitive Methodists, and to begin silently without any publication or announcement, and if the children of out-

siders came all well and good, they must act according to circumstances. They had a house-chapel at Shefford, that is, a building erected for the double purpose of a chapel and a residence, and it was occupied by the superintendent preacher. In it the school would be accommodated. Immediately on returning home, Mr. Bourne dispatched a parcel of books, and some burnt papers used in packing, it turned out, had on them the alphabet and a-b, ab, etc. These the careful and economical souls cut out and put on pasteboards to be utilised in the instruction of the children, as well as the books, and Mrs. Ride acted as superintendent. The first Sunday seventeen scholars were present, and the number continued to increase until at the beginning of December fifty-five were in attendance, and in making her first report to Mr. Bourne, Mrs. Ride expressed the expectation that they would have more and more, there being no other Sunday School in the place, and parents were frequently making applications that their children might be allowed to attend. The children were much pleased with the school, and were learning fast. Some said their children had learned more in four or five Sundays than they had learned at the day school for a long time past. The teachers were industrious and regularly at their posts, and the good brave woman concludes her account by saying, "We have had a little persecution from the quarter I expected we should, but it does not appear to hurt us at present, and if God blesses us, who can gainsay it?" Who indeed, Sister Ride? And so the silent, stealthy way of getting the school into the place succeeded. The plot of pious minds, the intrigue of loving hearts, accomplished its end.

The teachers and friends of one school would often pioneer the cause of the Sunday School in a neighbouring village or town where no school had been established. They would

hold a meeting or a mission distinctly in the interests of the Sunday School, explain its aims, methods, and effects, and advocate its adoption. They would appoint a delegation to be present at the inauguration of new schools, to conduct the opening, form the classes, settle the order, and initiate the officers into the duties of their position. In this manner schools would spread throughout a Circuit, and into remote and obscure hamlets. Repeatedly by the conversion of elder scholars and promising young people these adventurous efforts were upheld and carried forward.

In towns, branch or Mission Sunday Schools were founded sometimes in the worst and lowest streets and slums, that they might reach and redeem the children of the gutter. In 1838 a revival of zeal for the salvation of the young was experienced by the teachers and managers of the school at King's Lynn, and several new schools were begun in different parts of the town, into which some of the most neglected and depraved children, in what was called Fisher's End, were received, and an evident change for the better took place in their habits and appearance. Being taken from the vice of the street and instructed in the truths of the Gospel, there was reason to hope they would become wise, holy and happy. So wrote Rev. James Garner in the Magazine of 1840.

The anniversaries of the schools were made a great means of advertising their usefulness, and of calling public attention to the nature and results of their operations. Teachers, scholars and friends turned out in force for a grand procession in the streets and along the highways and through the by-lanes, visiting in country places the houses of such local gentry as regarded them with favour, going to lonely cottages, and to odd and isolated farmsteads, attended with an augmented choir and an imposing band of instrument-

alists, playing and singing a selection of anniversary hymns. For hours this parade would continue, the whole morning in many cases being given up to it, the march covering a stretch of several miles. The excitement was intense; it was infectious, communicating itself through the children to the parents and to the general population. It charged the atmosphere; the dreamiest places put on a lively air and a festive appearance. The heart of a town or neighbourhood palpitated and throbbed with genuine enthusiasm. Advantage was taken of the presence of the crowds and of the visits to various centres to give addresses and to send the collection boxes round, handsome sums in this way being raised for the funds. After the procession the services. And what services they were! Oh the glory and the power of them! If room, a platform was erected and crowded with scholars; if not room, the bulk of the children were sent home to make way for the adults. The recitations! who having heard those old recitations, by R. Jukes and other clever writers, could ever forget them? "The Primitive Ship," "The Primitive Railway Train," "The Primitive Watch," "The Satirical Poem," and other Primitive pieces in verse and prose, and the dialogue, the big dialogue, with twelve or fourteen or twenty youths and maidens figuring in it. How splendidly it went off! What a glorious impression it made! How the youngster delighted to take part in it! This was the height and crown of their ambition. That distinction attained they felt they could rest upon their laurels and look with proud eyes upon the humbler creatures of the universe. The music of the occasion was extraordinary; all the genius of the locality was gathered up into the orchestral band; all kinds of instruments were requisitioned—brass, reed, string, and the mere tuning up struck with wonder the juvenile mind. The anniversary, or charity, as it was called,



was the event of the year. Every other occurrence, however interesting or important, was completely eclipsed by it. Its attractions were irresistible and its influence swept the city or countryside and gave the school and its objects and achievements great prominence in the eye and imagination of the community. This unique character and position of the anniversary is still maintained by many schools in different parts of the country, especially in Staffordshire and Lancashire.

The week-night school became an important auxiliary of the Sunday School. In many cases it was distinctly connected with the Sunday School, practically under the same management, and taught by the same staff, with the addition of such intelligent persons as could be induced to join them. The week-night school was more generally devoted to the teaching of secular subjects than the Sunday School, although the religious element was scarcely ever entirely absent, and frequently received considerable attention and emphasis, the Bible being read, hymns sung, and prayers offered, at the opening and closing of each session. Adults as well as youths attended the week-night school. Indeed, the attendance of adults seems to have been an occasional feature of the Sunday School in the early years, and on visiting Nottingham in 1835, Hugh Bourne found that they had three schools, one for children and two for adults, the adult schools containing about two hundred scholars. The adult school remained a rare institution, and the number of adults attending either Sunday or week evening school was probably always comparatively limited.

The School Feast was introduced as a factor in school propaganda. It was adopted and used with the distinct design of advancing Sunday School work. In two ways it was hoped it would act beneficially. First, by encouraging



the scholars in their attendance; second, by exciting the interest of the public in behalf of the children. Norfolk, as far as we can ascertain, appears to have been first in the field in this matter. In the little village of Hendringham, Fakenham Circuit, on Tuesday, June 5th, 1838, the children, we are told, "looked with a wishful eye for the dawn and were ready to hail its sweet arrival. And the great Lover of little children sent a fine day. So soon as half-past seven in the morning they had assembled in the Chapel; after singing and prayer, the march round the village began. The sight was heavenly; more than a hundred children, all washed clean and dressed neatly. Three flags were hoisted and carried in the procession. On the first was inscribed, 'God is Love,' on the second, 'Feed My Lambs,' on the third, 'The Best Interests of the Young.' And the sweet and tender voices of the children chanted in melodious strains the praises of the Redeemer. During the afternoon a sermon was preached on the green to listening hundreds. A large table was set in a beautiful grass field. At each end of the long table a flag waved, another in the centre, and there were profuse decorations of flowers. At four o'clock tea was ready, grace was sung, and then, oh, what a scene presented itself!" exclaims the chronicler. And his lively and rhetorical pen proceeds: "The sun was shining, the birds singing, the flowers blooming, the flags waving, the children feasting, the teachers waiting, and the delighted parents smiling to see more than one hundred children so happy. Such a sight had never been witnessed there before." The proceedings of the day ended in an evening meeting addressed from what was called "a spacious platform." The writer of the account was the Rev. J. Phillips, who had preached the school sermons in May, and was at the feast. He was stationed at Ipswich at the time.

King's Lynn determined on a feast more imposing and sumptuous than the one we have just described. For some time teachers and managers had been anxious to hold one. The case at last was laid before the Circuit Committee. Some thought the expense would be too heavy, but the Committee finally decided that if the managers could so lay their plans as to give the children a feast without involving themselves, they were at liberty to proceed. The matter was taken up "in the name of the Lord." Observe that fact. Everything was done to glorify God. The liberal sum of eleven pounds was begged. The auspicious day was fixed, a field near the town was lent for the occasion, and accommodation made for *dining* four hundred children. At noon on Thursday, June 20th, 1839, the several schools, with ministers and friends, met in the Tuesday Market-place. The Rev. John Smith, the minister at Fakenham, was amongst the invited guests. The procession was formed, headed by a large silk banner, borne by two local preachers, on which was inscribed in bold gilt letters, "Primitive Methodist Sunday Schools."

Other banners floated in the breeze bearing appropriate inscriptions. The musicians followed the large silk flag, then proudly stepped forth four travelling and a number of local preachers, with teachers and scholars constituting the main body of processionists. The whole thing was a novelty. The innovation roused unusual attention. Crowds of spectators literally filled the Market-place and thronged the streets and field, while the upper windows of the houses presented the smiling and weeping countenances of approving friends. As the procession approached, the people divided and made way for it, and so it passed along through an avenue of living souls to its destination. The children were regaled with as much plum pudding and beef as they

required ; after this addresses were delivered by the Rev. J. Smith and others. Then, when teachers and friends had dined, back the procession wended to the Market-place. More words were spoken, votes of thanks were passed, and the exciting scenes that had been enacted ended in a quiet dismissal. In the evening, teachers and friends took tea together in the Baptist Schoolroom, after which addresses were given. The presence of the Lord was with them, and it was believed that from the good order and decorum which characterised the proceedings, and from the gracious influence which was felt, good would result, and an interest would be created in behalf of Sunday Schools, where it had not before existed.

Now you will notice in these accounts a striking absence of some of the things that form the principal features of our School Treats to-day. There is no mention of games, cricket, football, races, swings, skipping ; no mention of any form of play and amusement whatever. There is no mention of them because they were not indulged. A great deal in the way of frolic and fun, recreation and pleasure that we regard as perfectly innocent, even as desirable, was not then allowed. A stern prohibition was placed upon it. It was condemned and forbidden as sheer worldliness and vanity. The modern science of physical culture had not then been discovered. Any one given to a little laughter would have been regarded as frivolous. Mirth was looked upon as madness. The merry soul was denounced as a miserable sinner. The children were the victims of these perverted views, though we may well believe that like the children of all climes and ages they would contrive to enjoy themselves, and in spite of severe environment would find abundant opportunity for rapturous delight. No ! the feast day would not be a dull drab affair to them, depend upon it. The flag, the song,

the music, the multitude, the field, the feed, the gay scene, the martial movement would furnish them with a source of excitement and a fund of happiness that would fill their young souls with satisfaction, and whose memory would relieve the monotony and brighten the gloom of their poor homes for many a day.

## CHAPTER VI.

### EVANGELISM.

Active Evangelism a Feature of our Sunday School Work—A Sane Evangelism—Extravagances—Spiritual Culture—Salvation of Scholars Supreme Aim—A New Thing—Startling in its Effects—Speaking and Preaching to Children—H. Bourne—Camp Meetings and the Children—Incidents—Mow Cop—Class Meetings for the Children—The First Instituted at Tunstall—Young in Ordinary Society Classes—Sunday Evening Service for Poor Children—Retiring Room for Prayer and Private Talk.

A HEALTHY and active evangelism has always been associated with our Sunday School work. That work throughout all its details has in the main been saturated with the evangelistic spirit. Its chief conductors have been baptised with the power from on high, they have been filled with the fervour and fire of the Holy Ghost. They have entertained clear and noble conceptions of the moral and religious capabilities of the children. They believed them susceptible of the divinest impressions, the purest impulses, the loftiest experiences. They knew that in their young minds they had a marvellous comprehension of the truth and that their hearts responded readily and instinctively to the appeal of God's love and to the vision of the cross. Let it be frankly admitted that these enthusiastic instructors and champions of the children were not skilled theologians, and perhaps did not in all cases apprehend the precise position of the children in the Christian kingdom. But better than philosophical insight, exact scholarship, and literal orthodoxy was the passion that flamed in their souls for the salvation and safety of the young, for their upbuilding in

the grace and knowledge, the spirit and service of their Lord and Redeemer.

In its general drift and tendency the evangelism of our Sunday Schools has been a sane quantity. We do not wish to suggest that everything that has been done would gain the approval of fastidious people or secure the applause of the critically-minded, but on the whole the plans adopted and the practices pursued were eminently suitable and worthy, bearing the marks of strong commonsense. Courses and customs have sometimes been followed that would now be considered inappropriate and sensational, but in judging the past we must remember that the standards of education and taste vary considerably at different periods, and what would seem out of place in our age might have been quite legitimate in a previous generation, and have answered an excellent and useful purpose. No doubt there have been extravagances, but the extravagances of earnestness are rather to be chosen than the absolute correctness and the stilted proprieties of indifference and unbelief. Better an enlightened than an ignorant zeal, but better an honest, burning zeal that blunders and makes mistakes than no zeal at all. As the years have passed the evangelism of the school has come to be linked on more and more to spiritual culture, and to the teaching of those great ideas and ideals that form exalted character and that spell eternal life.

The supreme aim of leading the children as early as possible, personally and definitely, to accept Christ as their Saviour and Friend, has in our schools been kept well to the front from the first. They were taught to read, spell, write, and do arithmetic, but above all, they were taught the way of the godly life, and by every variety of argument shown the necessity and blessedness of walking therein. Scholastically the teaching might be very defective, but this one great



lesson was made plain—that to conquer sin, the world and the devil, to be upright, honourable and happy, they must cling to Christ with all their strength, fulfil His commands and do His will. This lesson shone and flashed in the school like the light of day. It throbbed in speech, song and prayer. Its note was struck from the desk and echoed in the class. The truth was presented with unwearied energy and application, and was brought home to the hearts of the scholars with stories from the pages of Scripture, or fresh from the life of the city or the annals of the village. The glory of the school evangel created the glow of the school evangelism.

Our school evangelism sought and found effective modes of expression. It did not confine itself to old, approved ways of working. Its abounding labours overflowed into new channels. It had little to learn from the Churches. Their attitude was mostly one of utter blindness to the vital, spiritual concerns of the young folk. The evangelism that contemplated the conversion of children and youths and maidens was itself a new and startling development. It burst upon the quiet, contented people of the Churches with the effect of an earthquake. To them it was an unwelcome intrusion, a dangerous experiment. They wondered what the end would be. They prophesied disaster to religion. But this strange thing that had made its appearance among them soon justified its own existence, and those who had risen up and gone forth to curse it, when they heard and saw and felt what a gracious and mighty power it was, pronounced a blessing upon it. This new evangelism was diligent, inventive, full of the divine genius that adapts itself to the occasion, that meets the conditions of the moment, and provides the means of realising success, in a most remarkable and triumphant manner. It followed as a rule



certain broad lines of action, and in the treatment of local symptoms it incidentally discovered remedies of wide and permanent value and set up institutions that possessed the elements of general utility and that frequently became popular and powerful.

The school address and the talking and preaching to children in the public services of the sanctuary came much into vogue. Both address and sermon were built in the old days on the saving truths of the gospel of the Son of God. The materials of which they were constructed were quarried from the Word of Life, and the appeal was made to the child's imagination, reason, judgment, conscience, heart. In harmony with the habit of the time, the discourse bore a grossly materialistic colour and complexion sometimes, and it is true that the speakers did not hesitate to play upon the emotion of fear, although they also and more often appealed to hope. Hugh Bourne told the children that if naughty they would go to the "bad place," a place prepared *not* for them but for the devil and his angels. He described the pit of fire and brimstone, whose flames were "blue, as blue, as blue." Though in awful and realistic terms he pictured hell, in rich, realistic terms he pictured heaven, told them of the radiant mansions, of the unfading inheritance of the saints, told them of its golden harps, its white robes, its victorious crowns and palms, and of the happy songs of praise they would raise to Him who loved them and redeemed them by His blood. By this sacred imagery he tried to open the eyes of the children to the things unseen and eternal, and to make them understand they were the heirs to an immortal destiny.

The Camp Meeting was a grand occasion for the children. As a rule the school, as a school, joined the procession and took part in the proceedings. In semi-circle the children

would be formed up before the waggon from which the preachers spoke. One at least of the preachers was expected especially to address his remarks to them, and scenes were witnessed at some of the Camp Meetings that gladdened the hearts of the saints and moved the souls of hardened sinners. Take this extract from the Journal of Jeremiah Gilbert. It relates to a Camp Meeting held at Ravensfield Common, Sunday, June 4th, 1820. Amid "mighty prayer souls were crying for mercy. A boy about twelve years old was made happy, and nearly at the same time a young woman of about fifteen years of age was brought to God, and an old man with hair as white as wool, and who walked with two sticks was trembling and crying to God to have mercy on his soul." At a Camp Meeting at East Tuddenham in Norfolk, Robert Key, the fiery herald of the cross in that county, preached a short sermon to the children, which produced a very powerful effect. The sight was very affecting; the children cried, the parents wept, the guilty trembled, and the careless stood confounded. After the sermon was ended, four or five of the children engaged in prayer and sang a hymn of praise unto the Lord. At West Bergholt, in Hadleigh Circuit, special services were appointed for the children in connection with the Camp Meeting, and God was graciously pleased to set the seal of His favour and blessing upon them. Among other good results recorded was this:—In the evening lovefeast a little girl was found penitent in her grandmother's pew, and found the Lord before the meeting closed. Let philosophers and sticklers for formality say what they will about such little incidents and touches as these—which were constantly occurring—they give pathos, beauty, and power to the story of the old Camp Meetings. It should never be forgotten that the last scene witnessed on Mow Cop on the memorable occasion of the first Camp

Meeting ever held in Great Britain was the consecration of a group of children to God. That scene on the sacred hill at the close of an historic day was typical, prophetic of the things that were to be. It was almost an epoch-making event in the relation of British Christianity and British Churches towards the children.

Class Meetings were instituted exclusively for the children. The first of such classes we have been able to trace was started at Tunstall on Easter Sunday, 1830, by the Rev. J. Hallam, the superintendent preacher of Burland Circuit, who appears to have been at Tunstall on a visit as a special preacher for the day. He furnished an account of the event in the Magazine for September following. He had visited the school in the morning, and in addressing the girls had informed them that in the evening he intended to attempt to form a class among them. Whether the announcement was the result of the inspiration of the moment or had been pre-arranged with the teachers and officials we cannot say; no information is given on the subject. But after a good time in the preaching service in the Chapel at night, he retired with the Secretary of the School and one of the teachers to meet the children in the upper schoolroom. Thirty-three were present. He spoke to them "in the way of a class." The Lord was with them in a powerful manner. All gave in their names to meet regularly in class, and in closing his account he expressed the belief that it would be a blessing to Primitive Methodism in Tunstall. This example was followed by others, and here and there juvenile classes were established as the years passed, though they did not come into anything like general vogue. In the Annual Report of George Street, Leicester, for 1839, we find they had two classes for the religious instruction of those scholars who were candidates for Church Membership.

In 1845 it was reported that in Kniveton, Hognaston, Youlgreave and Matlock Bank Schools the outpourings of the Holy Spirit had been strikingly witnessed, many of the scholars had been brought to the Lord, and some of them met in classes appointed specially for their training, while others met in regular classes. At Leek in Staffordshire a year later many of the children in the school sought and found redemption and two classes were formed for them, one for boys and another for girls. Coming down to 1860, we are informed that a class was formed at Shrewsbury for the benefit of those scholars who were seeking the Lord. These are illustrations of what was being done in many places up and down the country. That separate classes for juveniles did not multiply at a great rate need not surprise us when we remember the difficulty many schools would have in finding suitable leaders, and the more general practice was to draft young converts into adult Society Classes. And where the leaders were sagacious and sympathetic, a fair sprinkling, sometimes a large proportion of the members were young people.

A Sunday evening service for poor children was commenced at Hockley Chapel, Nottingham, in 1839, under the following circumstances. Hosts of them were drawn together by the open-air mission. As they could not be accommodated in the Chapel for the crowd, they were gathered in one of the vestries, which was filled with them. Mr. Spencer, a well-known and influential local Primitive, conducted a religious service for them. Hugh Bourne, who was in Nottingham at the time, gives us to understand that they were street children, unnoticed by any other religious community. They were invited to attend the Sunday School, and it was decided that the service in the vestry for them should be continued and zealous brethren planned to hold it.

At Stockport, where there was a large and excellent school, they had a peculiar but valuable institution known as the Retiring Room. There was one for the boys' section of the school and one for the girls' section. The story appears in the Magazine for 1841. The retiring room was in each case a small vestry. To that inner sanctum, that holy of holies, the classes retired in their turns. There they spent half an hour in private and reverent conversation, meditation, worship, and there many boys and girls first felt the stirrings of the heavenly life within them, or had good impressions already received confirmed and enlarged, learned to breathe their souls in prayer, and resolved on the straight course and the high calling of Christian discipleship.

## CHAPTER VII.

# REVIVALS AND THE REARING OF WORKERS.

Young Recruits, the Finest Fruit of Revivals—John and William Garner—Youths Impressed by Heroism of Missionaries—Boy and his Companions Converted under Singular Circumstances—School Centre of Revivals—Stirring Instances—Piety of a Child Affects Whole School—Conference Meeting Stirred by Story of Work Among the Children—Young Converts and Aggressive Work—In Training for Higher Service.

REVIVALS were the normal condition of Church life in the early history of Primitive Methodism, and the finest and most enduring fruit of those revivals were the young recruits. Many of these recruits became brilliant and victorious soldiers. They filled noble positions—they did valiant deeds. About them grew the halo and glory of renowned exploits and of disinterested and distinguished lives. John Garner, for instance, who was brought to God in 1817 under a sermon preached by John Benton, when he was quite a youth and apprenticed to a shoemaker, entered the ministry early and rose to the heights of fame as one of the original members of the Deed Poll, as filling the office of the General Missionary Secretary, and as being elected President of the Conference on no less than six occasions. Every recruit was made an agent for enlisting others in the royal service of the King. His talents were found employment, and talents or no talents, he was caught up in the spirit and passion of the revival. He was set to work immediately in a public way. If he could talk at all logically and coherently, or even if



he could not, he was called straightway to relate his experience and to preach the Gospel as he knew it, and had learned and felt its preciousness and power, to his seniors, to the crowds, to whomsoever would hear him. His deliverance often came to his listeners as an inspired breath from above. It had marvellous effects. The spring after his conversion, John Garner, to the astonishment of his brother William, preached at a camp meeting a sermon, "considering his youth and inexperience, of wonderful fluency and power." That sermon was the means of deciding William to be a Christian and a Primitive Methodist and of starting him on the remarkably successful career he acquired in the Connexion as preacher, biographer of William Clowes, man of rare business ability, officer of high rank, conspicuous conferential figure and ecclesiastical statesman.

The simple faith and self-abandon, the amazing fortitude and heroism with which the missionaries endured the ill-treatment meted out to them in many places, were well calculated to excite the admiration and sympathy of brave youths. Thomas Russell had been engaged at Ramsbury in "hot-skirmishing," as he styled it. He had encountered a mob who blew horns, rang handbells, and shouted, "Church and King!" "No ranters here!" "No preaching here!" In spite of the rattle and din and row and menace and danger, he took his stand on a heap of stones, and as well as he could gave them snatches of a discourse. Twenty youths, impressed and influenced by his patient and fearless bearing, followed him nearly a mile out of the town to demonstrate their friendliness, and probably to form his bodyguard. Before bidding them farewell he prayed with them. They all knelt down in the road, and as he prayed most of them wept; and so says he, "There was evidently a good work begun in their minds."

The furious and fanatical spirit of their elders naturally



affected the children, and some of them occasionally appeared among the persecutors. Thomas Russell tells of a boy who came to the meeting with stones in his pocket to throw at the preacher. Taking for his text, Jer. viii. 20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," the preacher spoke in the terms of agriculture. He described the tilling of the ground, the ploughing of the field, the sowing of the seed, the springing of the crop, the waving of the corn in the wind, the reaping with scythes and sickles, and the gathering of the golden grain by merry harvesters. The lad was pleased and possessed with what he heard; he was absorbed, spellbound, and, instead of throwing the stones, listened with all the eyes and ears he had got. The preacher sang to the tune of "Rule Britannia"—

"And soon the reaping time will come,  
And angels shout the harvest home."

He spoke of the harvest at the end of the world. "As I opened out the terrors of the judgment day," Russell writes, "the poor boy dropped the stones one by one till all were gone. The frightened little fellow ran home and told three of his companions the strange things the preacher had said. They all became serious, wept, and prayed, and entered the religious life and way. In years to come they gave proof that these experiences were something more than a morbid emotion. One of them became a Wesleyan local preacher, another a Baptist missionary, another an Independent minister, and the fourth a Primitive Methodist local preacher."

Repeatedly the school became the centre of the revival. It began with the children and spread from them, and through them, and by them, to the congregations and to the outside population. Of Biddulph Moor the Rev. J. Hallam in 1830 reports, "There is a glorious work among the Sunday

scholars. I had the pleasure of looking over a class paper on which I found the names of thirteen children who attended the class regularly and appeared much devoted to God." At Kingston Magna, Motcombe Circuit, about the same time, six young persons were converted at a lovefeast. During the following week an old man about seventy years of age, was translated out of darkness into light. He had never been known to attend the chapel before the preceding Sabbath. From this time a wonderful awakening and saving work took place, both amongst boys, girls and adults, so that within a few weeks in that village between sixty and seventy souls were brought out of the bondage of sin to rejoice in the love and freedom of Jesus Christ. From Frome, in 1833, came the glad intelligence that very small boys and girls had been witnessed crying to God for mercy and praying with the greatest sincerity, so that many conversions had taken place, and the work grew and extended. At Rockland, St. Peters, Norfolk, June 7th, 1840, was a day of signs and wonders. That day was the second of a week's protracted meetings. It was devoted to the children. The celebrations were planned on a scale and after a fashion entirely new to the village. Our good friends at Lynn, with their usual enterprise and generosity, lent their silk banner with the gilt inscription, and eight lesser banners besides, for the occasion. Each child in the procession carried a little flag, and the whole company marched along singing the high praises of God. Tea was served in a field. Recitations followed, and fourteen children addressed a numerous assembly, and all were edified and pleased to a high degree. Then a powerful prayer meeting was held in the open field. The blessings of heaven fell in a copious shower. Several professed to get real good. A young girl who obtained the liberty of the Spirit cried out for one of her com-

panions and lamented the state of her own father. The moon shone brightly on the scene, and the Divine glory streamed down upon the suppliants. This open-air prayer meeting continued till eleven o'clock, and was as mighty at the close as at the commencement.

A solitary child was often the source of influences that quickened and vitalised a whole school. Near the close of 1840 the Heworth Lane School, South Shields, witnessed a marvellous improvement in tone and conduct through the agency of a little girl. She had read much in our magazines, and by that means, it is related, she became acquainted with the nature of saving faith. She talked to her school-fellows about it—communicated to them the knowledge she had acquired by her reading. A marked change was soon observable. The children became more attentive to their books and more diligent in committing portions of Scripture to memory. The change in the conduct of the scholars was so impressive that a couple of the teachers were induced to announce that on the Saturday evening they would meet those of them who were anxious to love and serve the Saviour. When the time came a goodly number were present, the power of God was blessedly manifest among them and several declared themselves happy in the Lord. After that the Saturday evening meetings were constantly held, and proved a fountain of healing and blessing, the earnest prayers and artless experiences of the children giving interest and profit to all who attended them.

The story of these happenings in the schools of the Connexion was made the theme of many speeches at the Conference of 1840, and was the cause of much rejoicing. In his "Journal Notes" of the Conference, H. Bourne refers to a meeting in which the speaking ran almost wholly on Sabbath schools and other attentions to children, the delegates

giving historical accounts of the success with which the Lord had crowned them, and the great blessings He had made them, in the circuits from which they came. A powerful unction attended the addresses, and the faith of listeners was greatly increased by the things they heard. "The revivals," he narrates, "that had been set on foot by means of Sunday Schools and other attentions to children were extraordinary, and the conversions that had taken place by means of children, or through attention to children, were many and some of them striking." The recital of them was so affecting that the audience were occasionally bathed in tears, and by show of hands a hearty zeal was expressed to glorify God and benefit the rising generation.

Some of the revivals amongst the young were surprising in their scope and strength and in the reality and permanence of their results. The young converts banded themselves together for the purpose of missioning the places where they resided or adjacent towns and villages. They conducted open-air services often on their own initiative. They held cottage prayer meetings, and before the public preaching service they would go singing down the streets in full force and in grand style, inviting the people to attend the House of God and flee from the wrath to come. Lanes and fields, hills and dales, woods and farms, mines and factories rang with the voices of supplication and melody. The old songs and popular airs electrified their blood and brain. They lifted lustily the battle hymns of our fathers with their glorious refrains

"Turn to the Lord, and seek salvation."

"I His soldier sure shall be,  
Happy in eternity."

"For the Lion of Judah shall break every chain,  
And give us the victory, again and again."

What could be more appealing to them than such favourites as—

“ The Gospel Ship along is sailing.”

“ My old companions, fare ye well,  
I will not go with you to hell,  
I mean with Jesus Christ to dwell—  
Will you go? will you go? ”

“ My heart is fixed, Eternal God,  
Fixed on Thee ;  
And my immortal choice is made,  
Christ for me.”

They sang these hymns everywhere until everybody knew them and caught the fire of them and had their familiar strains flowing through their souls or humming in their hearts. Degraded districts were totally transformed. Whereas they had been notorious for drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking and rowdyism, they came to be known and respected for the sober, decent, peaceable, God-fearing lives of their inhabitants. Thus the School was the nursery of the Church, the training ground of its workers. The young whom it led into the light of God it consecrated and reared for its own service. Scholars became teachers, superintendents, secretaries, officers. The School also helped to prepare its pupils for the pulpit, the mission field and other exalted spheres of Christian usefulness. It gave to the ministry some of the best men that have ever adorned it. Many of them entered the ministry at an age so early as to astonish us. They were just lads in their teens—sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen—but they were lads that had in them the making of giants. The boy preacher and the girl preacher were common phenomena in those days, and not a few of these boy and girl preachers, as we have indicated, became famous men and women.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### MANAGEMENT.

Instructions Issued—Earliest Laws—As to Preachers—Singers—Complete Regulations Published 1832—Reasons for Them—Nature of Them—Three of Them Quoted—Additions Made to Them in Course of Time.

WE shall do well to remember that when Sunday Schools were new and just making their appearance everything in connection with them had to be explained to those who undertook their management, and if the instructions issued with regard to them were elementary, minute and detailed, it was because of the novel nature of the institutions and because the people addressed were quite unacquainted with them. Read in the light of our day they may seem quaint and curious; read in the light of that day they will be seen to be wise and necessary. In the case of Primitive Methodism we must also bear in mind this further circumstance, that they were addressed to a people, many of whom had not been favoured with any great educational advantages, and had not the opportunity of gathering intelligence, and of gaining practical knowledge of movements by travelling. The instructions issued by our authorities were simple and sufficient, they included all points of interest and they presented a plan that could be adopted and worked anywhere where children and teachers could meet. The length of time to be occupied was stated. Two sessions were suggested, one to be two hours long, the other an hour and a quarter, an hour and a half, or two hours. Rather an indefinite kind of clause that, but the next clause was



definite enough at any rate, for it declared that the teaching, including the opening and closing, should never exceed two hours at a time. Our teachers and scholars to-day would regard it as a terrible drag and drudgery to be detained two long, solid hours, but then many of the children did not attend day school at all, and would not feel it a burden, while the teachers were willing to make every sacrifice of ease and comfort to lift their young charge out of ignorance and vice. Instructions were given as to the appointment of officers, the selection of teachers, the procuring of books, the arranging of seats, the opening of school, the formation of classes, the order of teaching, and the ceremony of closing. The whole scheme was an elaborate and finished article. Everything was put on paper that had to be put into practice. It was put on paper that it might be put into practice, and there was nothing childish, obtrusive or pedantic about it. To the uninitiated it was perfectly essential, would save them from perplexity and delay, and guide them smoothly through the first difficult stages they would most naturally dread.

Amongst the earliest conferential laws with regard to Sunday Schools was one passed in 1821. It related to external rather than internal affairs. It was to the effect that in advertising Charity Sermons only the Christian and Surname of the preacher should be used. They were not to bill a preacher as the Reverend So and So, nor as So and So, Esquire, or even as Mr. So and So. This plain, quaker-like ordinance was in accord with the plain, unpretentious spirit of the people; it was intended to preserve their original, primitive simplicity. We have travelled far since then. We have grown in opulence and affluence. King and people have conferred their favours upon the members of our community. Two of our honoured leaders have received the dignity of Knighthood, and we have hosts of Mayors,

Aldermen, Councillors, and Members of Parliament. Our anniversary announcements are illumined and graced with all kinds of ecclesiastical, civic, and scientific titles. When that old law was repealed we do not know, but it was observed for many years with a slight modification that was made in 1823, changing "charity sermons" into "occasional sermons," which would include all special sermons of course, and adding with emphasis, "that wherever Mr. is prefixed to the name it shall not be considered as an official advertisement in our body as Primitive Methodists." Another of the early laws was that no singer at school anniversary should be paid a fee, and all persons engaged as special singers should be of good moral character.

A cause must be guarded carefully as it goes along. Its friends must have appropriate weapons with which to strike the enemy, checkmate his tactics and overthrow his designs. They must vigorously provide against the perils that spring up in its path. Experience teaches wisdom, and when wholesome discipline is needed, it should be exercised. The best of institutions requires the best of oversight. When allowed to drift things drift wrong—the ship gets on the rocks and goes to pieces. A capable pilot must be on board, a strong hand at the helm to steer the vessel into port. A prosperous, progressive state can only be produced by a good and stable government, and in order that Sunday Schools and Churches may thrive and flourish they must be under the domination of sublime Christian impulses and must be built on strict, orderly and circumspect lines. Laws for the guidance of our Sunday Schools crystalised into system, and were first issued in compact, consolidated form soon after 1832. They had a rather redundant and imposing title, being called "Rules, Regulations, Arrangements and Orders for Sunday Schools." A short preface gives their history. "The Con-

ference," it states, " of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, in the year 1829, received various applications relative to Sunday Schools in the Primitive Methodist Connexion. It was shown that in certain cases, instead of being a benefit to religion, some of these institutions, through improper persons having crept in as managers, had been inimical to religion, and had caused much annoyance to the Societies; and that the Sunday School property had, on some occasions, been lost through such persons having got it into their hands. And in order to prevent such injuries in future, and to promote and protect the Sunday Schools, various regulations were made, and these regulations were improved by the Conference of 1830 and 1832; and they now stand as follows."

These Rules established the yearly Teachers' Meeting to receive the yearly report of the School, consider the state and prospect of the School, audit the accounts, elect officers and appoint the Management Committee. They established the monthly meeting to read and consider the minutes of a previous meeting, to go through the teachers' roll book, and kindly and affectionately enquire the cause if any had not been *full* in their attendance, to ascertain the scholars' attendance and general behaviour, whether any of them appeared to be under serious concern for their souls, or had been converted since last meeting, or whether there were evidences of any general progress in piety among them. They defined the duties of officers and teachers, and the conditions on which children should be admitted and retained as scholars. They made each travelling preacher or any other delegate duly appointed by Quarter-day board or Circuit Committee a member of every Sunday School meeting, and he was to have access to all the accounts and proceedings of the School, that he might examine them and make due

report of the same to the Quarter-day board. There are two or three of these rules that are worth quoting. 1. "That our Quarter-day boards, circuit committees, and preachers give all due encouragement to these institutions." 2. "The office of Sabbath School teachers being very important, all who teach in this school must be persons who fear God and work righteousness." 3. "Teachers to be in their places five minutes before the school opens," etc. If this last rule could be enforced now in all our schools the advantages would be incalculable. The effect on order and reverence would be beyond description. It would act like magic in composing the scholars on their arrival, and in preparing the way for hymn and prayer, the lessons and worship of the day.

To the rules we have mentioned others were added as time went along, and as prudence seemed to dictate. By the Consolidated Minutes of 1836 it was ordered that Circuits on their reports to the District Meeting should present a list of its Sunday Schools, with the number of teachers and scholars, male and female, in each. In 1838 it was decreed that no one should be chosen superintendent, secretary, or treasurer to any of our schools, unless he was a member of the Primitive Methodist Society. Twenty years later the provision was extended so as to include vice-superintendents, a circumstance which seems to denote that vice-superintendents were being at that date appointed in some numbers. In 1839 circuits were required, on their annual reports, to insert a list of all the places of worship at which there were no Sunday Schools, and at the same Conference it was resolved that all preachers should address some part of every sermon they preached to the children. At the Conference of 1851 it was decided that at least one ministerial visit a quarter should be made to every school in each station,

and such visit was to be printed on the preachers' plan ; and in 1859 the schools were given the right of representation in the Quarterly Meeting of the station. The senior superintendent was declared entitled to voice and vote in the august Assembly of that High Court, and in case he could not attend the next senior superintendent in office was to enjoy and exercise the same privilege. This was a tardy act of justice. This free and democratic Church had certainly not been in a hurry to extend the franchise in any form to the constantly increasing wing of workers in the schools. Taking these regulations throughout, they betray the anxiety of their authors for the pious training of the children and the proficient management of the schools, and they are, we venture to think, examples of law-making of which the descendants of those pioneer legislators have no need to be ashamed.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ORGANISATION.

Power of Personality—Simple Measures—Select or Bible Classes—First Account of them—Great Teachers of them—A Curious Thing—The Battledore Class—Requisites—Dear and Scarce—Book Room at Bemersley—Children's Magazine and its Successors—First School Hymn Book—Second Edition—Its Merits and Service—New Hymn Book—School Rewards—School Libraries—First at George Street, Leicester, Byker Hill, Blackburn—Our Bands of Hope among the First—Colne-water-side—Remarkable Movement—Colonial Missions—Emigration—Australia and Scholars—New Zealand and Teachers—H. Bourne goes to America—Conference Resolution—Juvenile Missionary Speeches—Sermons—Meetings, Arrangements.

**I**N point of organisation some schools were in advance of others. It depended a little upon locality, it depended still more upon personality. When the right people are at the head things look up—they move on. Should one plan fail, another is tried; without scruple they abandon the inferior for the good, the good for the better, the better for the best. The most splendid organisation in the hands of the incompetent achieves no great success, while the poorest organisation engineered by the able and zealous soul works wonders. To those who have eyes to see, ways are open right to the heart of every problem. The solution is found by searching, and we come across remarkable instances of how schools by the adoption of some simple measure have risen in numbers and potency. Blackburn in the forties appointed two male and two female teachers to visit the absentees at their homes, and chiefly attributable to their



visitations was the fact that in twelve months there was an increase of eighteen teachers and an improvement in the attendance of scholars of nearly one hundred. Nelson Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, sent a fly-sheet address to the parents of the scholars, exhorting them to take a deep interest in the present and eternal welfare of their children, and by their instruction and example at home, co-operate with the teachers in saving them from the soul-destroying evils that everywhere abounded. The spirit of enthusiasm possessed by some devoted teachers drove them into the street in search of, if not the lost sheep, the lost lambs. Mr. A. M. Patterson, in his charming book, "*From Hayloft to Temple*," relates how his own father and another friend, David Coe, at Yarmouth, in the sixties, started out canvassing for scholars. They picked up in the street any little ragamuffin or stray urchin they could persuade to follow them. In one year they added one hundred children to the school. These boys were rough diamonds and original in their ways. One Sunday morning one of the recruits introduced himself to his new surroundings by turning St. Catherine wheels all the way up the aisle of the school as far as the superintendent's desk.

By select or Bible Classes it was hoped to retain and edify the elder scholars. It was enacted by the Conference of 1851 that "wherever it was prudent, a select class should be formed in connection with every school, for the benefit of the senior scholars, and it was to be conducted by a travelling preacher or some other suitable person appointed by the Quarterly Meeting." This legislation had been anticipated by many schools and by many preachers and persons of intelligence and piety. These classes had been in existence for years in various places and had proved an instrument of power. They brought fresh light and vision into the lives of scores and hundreds of the elder scholars. They lifted

them above the routine and the hum-drum of the ordinary school course and applied an abundant stimulus to intellect and heart, thought and affection. They tended to give breadth of mind, tenacity of faith, and robustness of character. The first we meet with were at Glasgow in 1830, where we had a good school and a select class of boys and another of girls, both of which were proving a great blessing to the Society. After a decade, in 1841 we read of two at Kelloe School, Durham. These classes were sometimes taught on a week-night. This was especially so when they were taken by a minister. It was his only opportunity, as his Sunday was mostly filled up with three or four or five public services. No set order appears to have been universally followed in the classes. The nature of the programme and the ground attempted to be covered depended largely upon the president or teacher. The more enlightened he might be, the more thorough and extended the programme was. The bottom motive and the final object in every case was to secure the growing youth of the Connexion to the Connexion and to Christ.

The first considerable account we have of one of these classes is given by William Fowler, who started and conducted it at Oldham in 1845. He had suggested the propriety of such classes being established in a very able and critical article in the Magazine of the previous December. He submitted the following plan:—1st. To read a portion of the Word of God, or a Scriptural Catechism. 2nd. To catechize the scholars on what they read. And 3rd, to instruct them in the “way of salvation,” with a direct reference to their immediate conversion to God. He asserted that he had known this plan tried with admirable success in some of our own schools, and that amongst the Congregationalists the “Bible Classes” had long been a

means of replenishing their Churches. He duly announced his intention of commencing such a class to his own officials, congregation, and young people. As introductory to its formation, he gave two lectures on the Holy Scriptures; the first on, "The History of the Bible," the second on, "Rules of Biblical Interpretation." The class was held on Saturday evenings from seven to nine o'clock. Any one above twelve years of age, male or female, was received. Mr. Fowler adopted the plan he had advocated in the Magazine, only he explained the passage under treatment one week, then carefully took them through it the next week, questioning them as to its meaning, etc., and he is mindful to inform us that he answered his own questions when the class could not. No shirking of difficulties we see, but a brave facing up and clearing up of the whole matter as they went along. When he had finished catechising them, he permitted them to catechize him. He was not content for them to receive and answer his questions, he would receive and answer theirs. At the first meeting there were fifty present at the class; the membership soon rose to eighty, and there were seldom fewer than from sixty to seventy in attendance. They made rapid advance in divine knowledge, and many of them were truly converted. Powerful mental attributes were developed, and every meeting added to the interest and pleasure of the members and their leader.

The year following the appearance of the above account, there came from Tunstall the intelligence that the Rev. Philip Pugh, the superintendent preacher, had begun a Bible Class on Saturday evenings, and the pupils were taught reading and received explanatory and practical observations on various subjects of Scripture, embracing its biography, geography, doctrines and duties. The minds of the pupils were carefully guarded against error in all its forms, the

principles of Christianity being taught from Scripture, not from human compositions ; and they were earnestly and affectionately urged to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The art of orthography and orthoepy, with other branches of learning, were introduced with much advantage. The practical and spiritual received close attention, for out of the Bible Class there grew " a religious juvenile class " which Mr. Pugh met on Sunday mornings.

The Rev. C. C. McKechnie was appointed fifth preacher to Sunderland Circuit in 1848. Shortly after his arrival he commenced a Bible Class for young women in connection with Flag Lane Society. There had been a crying need for a class of this kind, and when began it proved a marked success. Over fifty young women belonging to the families of the Church and congregation speedily joined ; some of them had received a good education, while others had received no such advantage. The only conditions of membership were ability to read the Bible and orderly conduct. His plan was simply to take a Book of Scripture, one of the Gospels, or one of the Epistles, and in as plain and interesting a way as possible, develop the doctrinal and ethical teaching, with special reference to the formation of character and guidance in life. He met the class weekly, on Friday evenings, and he would allow nothing short of insuperable difficulty to prevent his attendance. His work in connection with it was very successful, most of the members becoming attached to the Church. It added greatly to his influence and usefulness as a minister, and according to his biographer (the Rev. J. Atkinson), between him and many of the families to which the young women belonged a life-long friendship was formed.

At South Shields we learn that in 1851 a plan was in operation for the instruction of the children in the doctrines

of our holy religion by the superintendent preacher—Moses Lupton—the local preachers and the teachers. No hint of the plan is given, though the number of parties co-operating in it suggests the old aphorism, “Too many cooks spoil the broth.” But no doubt proper arrangements would be made for some one of these parties to give an address or a lesson on some distinct truth or phase of truth as the weeks came round.

In the memoir of the Rev. William James White, which appears in the Conference Minutes of 1870, it is stated that when he was a young mechanic in the city of Carlisle he became a member of a Bible Class held by the Rev. J. A. Bastow during that minister’s superintendency of the station, and that in this Bible Class Mr. White acquired a keen relish for Biblical literature, a study in which he gained remarkable proficiency. Now that is a very interesting piece of information. We are delighted to have discovered it. This stray reference is in all likelihood the only record we have of the fact that Mr. Bastow taught such a class, though it may lead to the not unreasonable surmise that for years he might have been teaching a similar class in all his Circuits. Now Mr. Bastow was undoubtedly the greatest Biblical scholar our Church has had given to it, with the exception of Dr. Peake. He was regarded as an authority on a wide range of topics relating to Biblical knowledge and research. He was author of a Biblical Dictionary extending to three volumes, that in learned circles awakened much interest and was heartily hailed. The late Mr. W. E. Gladstone possessed a copy of it, and wrote the author a letter complimenting him upon its excellent scholarly character and thanking him for its production. Mr. Gladstone’s copy of the work is now in the Deniol Library, Hawarden, and shows signs of having been well used by its original owner.



No wonder that under such a tutorage, such a professorship, young mechanics acquired intellectual tastes and passed through high courses of study to a cultured ministry.

A young men's Bible Class was associated with Ballast Hills, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and there William Gelley, successful evangelist, popular speaker and minister, and other notable men were fitted for their divine commissions. As Mr. W. M. Patterson, in his racily written book on "Northern Primitive Methodism," has pointed out, at one time this class had the singularly good fortune to have a president and a pupil whose transcendent gifts, of Bible exposition in the one case and of pulpit and platform oratory in the other, gave them a position of transcendent power among us. The president was the Rev. Thomas Greenfield, and his pupil was Hugh Gilmore. Look at the romance of it; Hugh Gilmore growing up in the streets of Glasgow wild, untamed and apparently untameable, after various adventures in Liverpool and elsewhere, wandering to the Tyne and by one of our local preachers, with whom he providentially went to lodge, invited to Ballast Hills Chapel. He went, and continued to go, and shortly was awakened into newness of life. Then that college term in the class, his admission into the ministry, and his eloquent gospel preaching and public and political speaking, rousing his audiences to white heat throughout England and in far off North Adelaide. But behind that romance is another that makes the story all the more romantic. The superintendent of Ballast Hills School was Mr. W. B. Leighton, and, says Mr. Kendall, "about the year 1830 Mr. Leighton, then only a young man himself, invited a youth who was playing at pitch and toss to go with him to the school hard by. The youth yielded to persuasion kindly given, and from that simple incident Thomas Greenfield was accustomed to date



his conversion." Look on that picture, and then on this. Rev. Henry Woodcock was asked by a Church clergyman, "Can you give me the address of the Rev. Thomas Greenfield?" "I regard him," went on the clergyman, "as by far the best Hebrew scholar I have ever known. . . . A prodigious scholar and a great theologian." In these historic items are the elements of a romance which, if glorified by the genius of a Sir Walter Scott, a J. M. Barrie, or an Ian Maclaran, would thrill the world.

There was another class in the schools which we confess is a little of a mystery to us. We are puzzled by it. It was called the *Battledore* Class. Hugh Bourne, on going to Nottingham, speaks of visiting this particular class and hearing the spelling lesson, and in a catalogue of books issued by the Book Room in 1830 a great variety of new Battledores are advertised at one penny each. The article advertised and used can hardly have been the little wooden instrument with which the merry boys and girls—especially the girls—send the shuttlecock flying and spinning through the air. What then was it? and what was the Battledore Class? As the Bible Class was for the elder scholars, we judge the Battledore Class was for the youngest. Was it a sort of pre-historic attempt at kindergarten? Or was it a fancy name bestowed upon what in commonplace English would be known as the infant class and its requisites. We suspect the latter to be the true explanation. Why this name came to be given we can only speculate. But we are going to risk a reason. It probably arose from the peculiar method of procedure Mr. Bourne encouraged the teachers to cultivate. In teaching the little mites of four and five years to spell words of two letters, such as "My," for instance, he enjoined them to begin with the first and teach it to say m-y, my, and so all round the class in the same way with

each child that all should know the word and have it so fixed in mind and memory that they would never forget it. This style of playing shuttlecock and battledore with words may have led to the picturesque title being given to the class.

We have seen that Sunday School requisites were dear and almost beyond the reach of our people at the commencement of their efforts to benefit the children. Hugh Bourne made tremendous exertions to supply those requisites at the lowest possible rate, and yet we have ourselves inspected the old school treasurer's book for Derby, and for 1827 one of the entries is as follows:—"Paid to Br. Bourne for six Bibles in parts, £1 10s. 0d." Think of it, and the enormous sacrifices such heavy charges would entail upon poor, working people. All literature was expensive. The paper tax and other taxes in those good old days of Protection made the poetry of Milton, the dreams of Bunyan, and all other products of the pen and press prohibitive to the sections of society touched by our Churches. For long years suitable literature for teachers and scholars was scarce and practically inaccessible, although it was an urgent necessity. The mind either of child or man running in cramped, narrow grooves, becomes cramped and narrow. Reading is essential to mental growth and progress. Contact with the thoughts of great thinkers begets thoughtfulness. Pure, lofty, beautiful ideas kindle pure, lofty, beautiful aspirations. After pondering a great spiritual book, a man lives in a new world. Communion of soul with soul in holy worship, work, conversation, or through the medium of the printed page, is a process that tends to uplift and enlarge the life. But between the thinkers and writers of the age, of all ages, and the masses of the population, lay an impassable gulf. To bridge that gulf was the work of philanthropists and reformers, and good Hugh Bourne played his part in that magnificent

performance with a modesty, a heroism and a perseverance that were beyond all praise. Steadily he and his brother James, with the sanction of Conference, and the help of others, but chiefly by their own indomitable pluck and courage, built up at Bemersley a Book Room concern from which light radiated and streamed in all directions, bringing cheer to teachers and parents, to school, scholar, and home.

The Primitive Methodist Children's Magazine was projected and proposed by Hugh Bourne. The first number appeared in October, 1824. It was "designed for the immediate use and benefit of the rising generation," and was sold at one penny. It was a very small affair consisting of sixteen pages, and was five inches long by three broad. It contained an introduction which was a short pithy address to the children, and among other articles a conversation on Creation and the beginning of a series of articles entitled, "A Commentary on Language, containing various observations on grammar and style and on writing and speaking." Small affair as this appeared to be, it was a great and daring thing to attempt. There was anxiety as to whether it would find a market and pay its way. It was stated that the expense of publication would be such that it could not be issued without a guaranteed circulation of one thousand. The thousand were allocated to the several Circuits, a start was made, and the Magazine was sent on its mission. The time of suspense ended in glorious success. Copies were soon all sold out and new orders kept arriving. A third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh thousand were successively printed off in response to the demand. Seven thousand were necessary to supply the immediate demand, and leave a fair margin for future orders. Hugh Bourne, the originator and editor, together with his sympathisers in the undertaking, must have been wonderfully excited and over-

joyed by the crowning triumph that had rewarded their enterprise.

The Children's Magazine continued to be published in its original form until 1842, when the number of pages were doubled, although they remained the same in size. But in 1852 it gave place to the *Juvenile Magazine*, which, though issued at the same price, was much larger and better illustrated, and extended to twenty-eight pages per month. The *Juvenile* was received with great favour, the circulation leaping up in its first year to upwards of thirty thousand. It was considered a marvel of cheapness. The engravings were regarded as exquisite and stated to be costly. In the preface to the first bound volume of it the assertion was made that a periodical of the same size was being issued in London without any engravings whatever and sold at six times the price. The *Juvenile Magazine* was improved and perhaps improved again, until it made way for its successor, *The Morning*.

The preface to our present Sunday School Hymnal affirms that "this Hymnal is the third that has been prepared and issued by the Primitive Methodist Church, its predecessors having appeared in 1862 and 1879 respectively." That statement contains an unaccountable mistake, conveys a totally wrong impression. The implication is that no Primitive Methodist Sunday School Hymn Book was published before 1862. But that is not so. There was one published forty years before that date. It was catalogued in the Book Room list of Sunday School requisites in 1824, and that list of requisites was printed and bound up with the Conference Minutes for that year. Here is the advertisement taken from the Catalogue. It heads the list.

1. Sunday School Hymn Books for children, containing 224 hymns, bound in red . . . 0s. 10d.

Proper allowance to schools taking a quantity.

The book was probably published two or three years before this advertisement appeared. There was a preface, which although unsigned, was unquestionably from the pen of Hugh Bourne. Internal evidence points infallibly to him as the author. A second edition of it was published about 1862. It was then called, "The Sunday Scholars' Companion," and was accompanied by an advertisement which says, "This edition has been greatly improved, and a number of additional hymns have been inserted, and we trust it will be more and more useful." Thirteen hymns were added. In every other respect the second edition was the same as the first, except that the pages were numbered. Arrangements, index of subjects, order and numbering of hymns, everything remained as before, with the solitary exception to which we have referred.

The second edition was largely bought for several years after the new School Hymn Book of 1862 was issued. On the merits of the book we need not dwell. That it served our Schools for nearly half a century surely speaks volumes in its behalf. Some of its hymns would be ruled out of court for children to-day, but when it was made, sweet, simple, child-hymns were few, and considering the limited range of choice presented, the compilers made an uncommonly good and judicious selection. The book contained many original hymns from Hugh Bourne and others, and its practical value may be judged by the fact that it helped very effectually to inspire the worship, uplift the minds, and mould the characters of several generations of children. The new Hymn Book of 1862, while an improvement on the first one, was by no means an ideal book. The old one pressed it hard for some years in its bid for the favour of the schools. Both sold extensively, the old book keeping up the competition remarkably well. Steadily, however, it fell



behind in the race, the new book as it became known gaining the advantage, steadily winning support and widening its constituency, until it finally held the field.

To encourage propriety in the behaviour, as well as regularity in the attendance of the children, rewards came to be given early. Apart from the natural desire to provoke and recognise merit in the scholars, the adoption of this means of stimulating zeal and discipline among the scholars was hastened by the inducements offered by other schools, particularly those connected with the Established Church, to attract them away from the Primitives. Our people felt themselves compelled to enter into this competition, and to do their best to hold their own. One excellent point of the old system of prize-giving was that it invariably linked good conduct with attendance. It sought to develop quiet, orderly deportment. Another argument in its favour was that the gift of a good book to a poor child was not only a source of encouragement and edification to him, but might come to be regarded and revered as a light of love and a lamp of truth in the household to which he belonged. On Tuesday, November 10th, 1840, a public meeting was held, in the Chapel at Tunstall, that appears to have been the first of its type in the Connexion, although it was soon imitated and copied by other places. A platform had been erected and one hundred and three Sunday School scholars—thirty-five boys and sixty-eight girls—took their seats upon it. They were the chief actors in the meeting. They recited pieces. The novel feature was that tickets of admission had been previously disposed of at threepence each, and the Chapel was filled at an early hour. The profits were appropriated, first to furnish each child with a reward for his or her industry, and secondly, to assist the Tunstall Circuit in carrying out their mission in Ireland. We imagine



the reward in this case was intended for each child that had taken part in the meeting. In after years the distribution of prizes in some schools was limited to those who had recited at the anniversary, while in others it partook of a more general character. Rewards as well as requisites were supplied by the Book Room, and Hugh Bourne recommended a kind of sub-book dépôt in all the Circuits. His idea was that every Circuit should keep a good stock of books on hand, replenishing the store as they sold out. That would save time and trouble, and prevent delay and inconvenience. It would enable orders to be supplied at once. Excellent and practical as the idea may appear to be we apprehend that it was not very extensively accepted and tried.

The value of libraries in disseminating knowledge, in creating mental and religious improvement, fostering literary tastes and sharpening intellectual appetites was perceived in good time by the builders of our Sunday School organisation. The cheapening of paper and the perfecting of the printing art, and the printing press came to their assistance. Gradually books of the kind required began to be written and issued at a reasonable price. Publishing houses made their appearance that catered for simple, uneducated people, and prepared sound and good literature for the million. But when the Sunday School libraries first began to be formed there would be a great deal of struggle and sacrifice to make a decent show, and to provide for the needs of the mixed constituencies. Those master builders, however, built away at their temple of literature, adding stone to stone, book to book, until the impossible was accomplished. The first Sunday School Library we read of was at George Street, Leicester. Whether it has an actual and indisputable claim to the premier position we dare not affirm. Possibly it was preceded by others, but

at any rate it is the first that has come under our observation. In the annual report of the school for 1839—a report which showed the school to be in a prosperous condition and to be modelled and managed on the best principles—they were able to boast of possessing a library with one hundred and forty-five volumes. The library was open to the teachers, members, scholars, *etc.* What that *etc.* might mean we can only guess. One wonders whether the generous people opened it to the outside public, and if so on what terms, whether free or at a small charge. Byker Hill School was commenced on July 12th, 1840. The first year was one of exceptional success, and before its close they were making active exertions to establish a library, hoping it would prove interesting to both teachers and scholars. A number of volumes had been given by different individuals, and in the course of a few weeks it would be opened to those for whom it was intended. At Blackburn a short time after this they formed a library of about one hundred volumes, and about the middle of 1846 they added sixty more volumes, many of which were very valuable. The teachers and scholars had the use of the books gratuitously, and persons not immediately connected with the School might have the loan of them for one halfpenny per week. In the fifties and onwards, when the book market began to be better and more cheaply supplied, libraries multiplied, until no large, self-respecting School felt its equipment was complete without one.

Our Sunday Schools have held an honourable place with regard to temperance effort and organisation among the young. Many of the first Bands of Hope in the kingdom were formed in connection with them, and frequently our Band of Hope, or the Band of Hope held on our premises, was the only one in the town or village. And from those

pioneer Bands of Hope formed and cherished by a handful of pious, patriotic people came some of the mightiest champions of temperance in the later days. In them were reared staunch advocates who in eloquent, impassioned terms proclaimed from a thousand pulpits and platforms the principles that they had there imbibed. Seven years before the felicitous title of Bands of Hope was given to Juvenile Temperance Societies, and only eight years after the "seven men of Preston" had signed their total abstinence pledge and entered upon their teetotal crusade, there appeared a kind of manifesto from the Burnley Circuit, Lancashire, signed by the superintendent preacher, Thomas Jopling. It began in a challenging trumpet tone: "We wish it to be known that we have adopted what in our parts is considered a new measure." Then the document goes on to relate that they had a flourishing School at Colne-water-side, a place which for generations had been noted for wickedness, the besetting sin of the inhabitants being drunkenness. The school had effected a partial reformation among the young of the neighbourhood, but there was danger that the instructions given on the Sabbath might be lost during the week, through the example of individuals connected with the families to which the scholars belonged, and with whom they had to reside. To guard against this danger there was formed what was called "The Colne-Water-Side Sunday School Tee-total Society." It consisted of those employed or taught in the school, who would sign and keep the following pledge:—"I do willingly promise that I will abstain from all porter, wine, ardent spirits and all other intoxicating drinks, except under medical prescription, or in religious ordinance." Rather big words for little minds! But we may suppose that they would be explained to all to whom the pledge was administered. How strange it seems that the

infinite peril against which they were seeking to guard the young should have been retained at the Lord's Table! But there was less excuse for them retaining it than for us. Since then science has demonstrated the awful risks of alcohol even as taken from the sacramental cup. The morning the roll was opened and real business commenced, not less than sixty connected with the School gave in their names to form a band of youthful tee-totallers. This was the first Juvenile Temperance Society we have encountered in the history of our Church; and we observe that its promoters rested it upon a religious foundation, took precautions to save its members from priggishness, and enjoined upon them the duty of being humble, genial, affectionate, and of persuading others to embrace the cause that they themselves had espoused. For two of the principles on which the Society was based were:—1. That its members were not allowed to speak harshly of, or to condemn those scholars who were not members, but by loving words and kind actions, to endeavour to prevail on them to join the ranks. 2. That the Society founded all its hopes of success on the blessing of God accompanying its efforts.

Our Church was essentially a Home Missionary movement for many years. But with the tide of immigration that carried numbers of our members to the New World out West, our leaders began to look with anxious eyes across the Atlantic. And rightly or wrongly, in 1829 they sent four missionaries to the United States of America. The following year, in response to the request of Primitive Methodists who had gone from Carlisle and other places in England to Canada, and had settled at Toronto, then a small, rough, uninviting town, a missionary was sent to them. These missions, though established with the sanction of Conference, were under the management, not of a representative

body or committee, but of a couple of Circuits, Tunstall and Hull sharing the honour between them. For this reason, and for other reasons, such as the youth of the Connexion, it not having attained its majority, and the strain that was upon it through its aggressive and abounding labours at home, no great excitement had been occasioned by the mission to the United States and Canada. But when in 1842 a decision was taken to open a Mission in Australia it was different, the Connexion was older, stronger, better organised; the tide of immigration was setting in deeper and wider, and was evidently destined to take groups and groups of our friends, from mining and industrial centres and from agricultural counties, across the seas, and plant them beneath the Southern Cross, in the home of the Maoris, the climes where they could dig gold and grow wheat and wool, and where they would find health, plenty, peace, and freedom. Sunday Schools were now a great factor in the life and strength of the Connexion, and the imagination and heart of the children could be touched and thrilled with the story of this new and grand adventure. In 1842 the Conference gave the General Missionary Committee "liberty to send a missionary to Australia when sufficient funds were raised to pay his passage." A plan was suggested, according to the Rev. J. Petty, by the Bottesford Circuit, for enlisting the help of the Sunday School scholars in the mission. It was cordially adopted by several circuits, and produced considerable assistance towards the expense of the undertaking. The suggestion also received the official stamp and seal of the Conference, for in 1843 it reaffirmed the resolution of the previous year, incorporating the significant clause, "in aid of which it shall enlist the co-operation of Sabbath scholars especially." The requisite funds were soon raised, and after delays and disappointments in the



attempt to obtain suitable men, two missionaries, Joseph Long and John Wilson, sailed on June 12th, 1844, for Adelaide, South Australia.

In the meanwhile, William Harland, in an exciting missionary meeting at Old Cramlington Colliery, Northumberland, had suggested the practicability of missionaries being sent to New Zealand, and sustained there by the yearly contributions of the Sabbath School teachers. Instantly a resolution was carried on the spot approving the suggestion of each teacher raising the sum of one shilling during the ensuing year towards a mission in New Zealand, resolving that locally they would put the suggestion into operation, and recommending the Connexion to do the same. The resolution was sent abroad, signed by John Lightfoot, the superintendent preacher of North Shields Circuit, and Thomas Hall, superintendent of Cramlington Sunday School. The suggestion took hold of the heart of many teachers. As it became known enthusiasm gathered about it. The response was so ready and liberal that Robert Ward was engaged by the Missionary Committee, and sailed for New Zealand on May 2nd, 1844, nearly six weeks before the missionaries departed for South Australia. In that unsettled country, with its native problems, its sparse and scattered populations, its frightful hardships, its long journeys on horseback in the bush, fording rivers and crossing mountains and plains, and its rough and tumble life, Mr. Ward proved himself one of the most intrepid, unselfish and successful of missionaries.

Another thing that impressed the imagination of the Connexion—at least the imagination of the younger portion of it—and excited sympathy with missions, was the sight of the venerable Hugh Bourne, at the age of seventy-six, bearing a burden of physical infirmities, going forth to visit,



advise and help the stations in North British America and the United States.

Such was the state of missionary sentiment and feeling that the Conference of 1845 resolved that the South Australian Mission should be regarded as distinctively the Sunday School Children's Mission, because it was solely supported by them, and the New Zealand Mission was to be regarded as distinctively the Teachers' Mission, although it was to be assisted out of the General Mission Fund if the Sunday School teachers could not wholly support it.

Matthew Denton, of Beverley, wrote urging that "missionary subjects should be repeatedly brought before our children, missionary addresses should be delivered to them and steps should be taken to organise Juvenile Missionary Associations; and where our schools are large, to hold juvenile missionary meetings." In that sentence Mr. Denton summarised the points that needed attention, and one or other of these points, if not all of them, began to receive practical consideration and development in the best of the schools. Before these counsels had appeared, James Garner, in the late autumn of 1843, preached missionary sermons to the scholars at Preston and Church Town, the first sermons of a missionary character, we apprehend, preached among us to the children. The sermons had an immediately good effect in provoking interest and securing gifts, and Mr. Garner insisted that the plan of missionary sermons to children, prudently and zealously adopted, would be the means of imparting to them useful intelligence and of encouraging them in a laudable work.

At Wisbech the school met for its annual procession and festival, but the wet unfavourable weather preventing them following their usual custom, they started to discuss the Australian Mission, and by a vote of the whole school

they agreed to recommend that the Sunday Schools throughout the Connexion should be formed into the Primitive Methodist Juvenile Missionary Society, with branches in every Circuit. They proceeded at once to form their schools into an auxiliary to be called the Wisbech Branch of the Primitive Methodist Juvenile Missionary Society. It was afterwards arranged that the inaugural meeting of the branch should be held on May 14th, 1844, and that is claimed to have been the first Juvenile Missionary meeting held in the Connexion.

The amount to be raised by the schools was fixed by the Editor at one penny per scholar annually. It was pointed out, however, by critics, that unless all did their duty and subscriptions averaged the penny per scholar, sufficient money would not be forthcoming, and one penny per quarter was suggested as the amount to be aimed at for each scholar. As there were some laggard schools and some laggard teachers who did not give their proportion of the fund, or show in any way their sympathy with the movement, an address was issued to the delinquents, written by the Editor, to stir up their minds and prompt them to action. Missionary cards, books and boxes were issued, and the Conference of 1856 recommended that the young should be employed to secure Christmas and New Year's juvenile offerings, and again in 1865 it urged the Circuits to employ scholars as missionary collectors at Christmas each year, and to have an annual Juvenile Missionary meeting.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PRESIDING GENIUS.

H. Bourne Intimately Associated with the Origin and Progress of the Schools—His Love for the Children—Shaking Hands with Them—Preaching to Children—Treatment of Children—Teachers of Babes—Pretended Improvements—New System of Forming Schools—Knowledge of Child-nature—Children Laughing—Views on Teaching : (1) Be Natural ; (2) Short Lessons ; (3) Variety ; (4) Keep Pupil Employed ; (5) Don't Puzzle ; (6) Object Lessons—Advance Educationalists—Death and Burial.

THOSE who have followed the story of the rise and progress of our Sunday Schools up to this point must be convinced that Hugh Bourne was the presiding genius of the movement. He was active at the beginning of it, and throughout its early, eventful course, giving it direction and pouring into it the strength and treasure of his life. He was the father of our Sunday Schools. They flowed from the fountains of his soul. When they were attacked, he fought in their defence ; when in difficulty and trouble, he hastened to their help. His money, time, energy, speech and pen were unreservedly placed at their disposal. From his brain emanated the rules and regulations for their government. His hand laid the foundations and reared the structure of the whole system. Without him it had not been ; without him it could not have been at the time and after the fashion it was. He was the soul of it. He impressed his peculiar genius upon it. He watched and tended it with the same

tender oversight the mother gives her child. He lavished his love upon it, spent many strenuous days and years in its interests, and walked thousands and thousands of miles that he might supervise and strengthen it.

Hugh Bourne remained unmarried, and retained much of the shyness naturally bred in him by the wild, isolated, moorland home of his boyhood. He had a rather rugged exterior and dressed in clothes not of the latest fashion and often shabby with long wear. He did not present a very prepossessing appearance. Besides, he bore marks of pronounced eccentricities of manner and habit. Some people said he was capable of violent displays of bad temper. Yes, he was vehement. In the presence of selfishness, worldly craft and cunning his indignation blazed out. On those who made a cloak of religion he breathed his withering scorn; against them he hurled the thunder-bolts of his wrath; he denounced them with the fiery boldness of a Hebrew prophet. But those who called him a crabbed old bachelor libelled him, for in the heart of this old bachelor there was ample space for the shelter of the children. They claimed a large share of his love. He had for them a depth of affection that was never exhausted. To the last it flowed as fresh and full as the stream from a perennial spring. How sweetly he smiled upon the little ones. How he patted and stroked them on the head, and, laying his hands upon them gently, bade them be good and say their prayers. And it was not sentimentalism with him. He was moved by serious and solid motives. The reasons for his conduct lay deep in his religion. The love of Christ constrained him in his attitude towards the children as truly and as completely as it constrained Paul in his missionary journeys, or in his defiance of imperial Rome. He would put himself to inconvenience and hurry off to a school that he might have the privilege of shaking hands with the children.

It was a custom of his, one that he prized as a precious opportunity. He declared that it was a means of edification to him to shake hands with all the children throughout a school. On such occasions he dropped words of counsel and cheer to the little ones that were designed to induce piety and lead them to walk humbly and trustfully with God.

Like so many great and good men, he had a profound reverence for the young. He stood in awe before them as he contemplated the possibilities of their power and the immeasurable good or evil they might do. In writing to ministers he said:—"Remember that 'Honour all men' belongs as much to children as to grown up people, and you must pray to God to write it on your heart; for most people are strongly tempted to undervalue children; and if you in the least give way to that temptation, it will obstruct your faith." He knew that to depreciate children in their relation to truth, righteousness, the Church, Christianity, citizenship, or the future of their life was a blunder, the penalty of which would be irretrievable disaster.

He strongly believed in preaching to children. He was a children's preacher—always preaching to them, in season and out of season. He could not pass a group of boys or girls at play without speaking a few kind words to them. An article in the *Christian Ambassador*, February, 1862, has some pregnant words on this subject:—"Amidst the multitudinous engagements constantly pressing upon him, this appeared to be the work most congenial to his disposition, and most imperatively required by his conscience; it may, indeed, be said to be the work of his life. Everything else was made to bend to it. He would leave any company, however attractive, and any engagement, however urgent, when opportunity presented of addressing a word of religious counsel to a few children." When at the advanced age of seventy-



two, he went to America to superintend the missions there, the last sermon he preached before taking ship was to children at Liverpool, and when he landed on the other side of the Atlantic he opened his commission at Toronto by teaching in the Sabbath School and afterwards preaching to the children.

The last Conference he attended was at Yarmouth in 1851, when he was approaching eighty years of age. During the Sunday he preached seven plain, pointed, powerful sermons, and almost all of them directed to the young. He would sometimes close a discourse to adults with a beautiful and impressive appeal to the children, and he hoped the time would arrive when every preacher in every sermon would feel it his duty to give a portion to the young.

He held that every preacher and every Christian, on entering a house, should be an evangelist, a spiritual tutor to the younger members of the family, trying to sow seeds of piety in the infant minds, and to say something that by the blessing of God might be a help to them. With his example and exhortations before them it was no marvel that so many of our ministers devoted themselves intelligently and assiduously to the service of the young. In his visitations he was in the habit of dropping useful hints to parents on the proper treatment and training of their family. On one occasion when taking tea with a respectable Wesleyan lady at Derby, her little boy rushed into the room uncereemoniously, and proceeded to make himself heard after the fashion of his kind. Annoyed by his rudeness, the mother began to lecture and sharply reprimand him. Mr. Bourne took her to task, and told her she should never scold and "brow-beat" her child in that manner, but treat him as a rational being, reason with him on his conduct, and try to convince his judgment that it was wrong. Subsequently



she expressed to Dr. W. Antliff her gratitude for the lesson she learned as to the right method of correcting children.

He extolled the dignity of those who were teachers of babes. He magnified their office and their work. He gave them front rank. He exalted them to first place, and though some of them might be of inferior education and capacity he recognised that harsh criticisms and foolish snubs were not likely to improve them. He admonished critics not hastily and rashly to criticise, but to encourage and speak words that should be inspirations, spurring sincere, honest hearts to seek the better and the higher, the best and the highest qualifications. He warns the amateur not to assail the Sunday School expert, though the amateur might be a minister and the expert a comparatively obscure man. The management of the school may not be perfect; you may think you have in your head the idea of perfection—be careful how you broach it. And to check the impatient he says, “You must bear in mind that in all cases faith and industry will succeed.” No, there may not be perfection, but faith and industry produce astonishingly fine results. “Guardian parents” was a favourite phrase with him for describing those who care for the instruction and cultivation of children not their own. He used it frequently, and the phrase throws light upon the high estimate he formed of the sacredness of their function and character.

He was down on improvements that were not improvements. Such improvements at times were hazardous and harmful. He told a story to illustrate. A missionary or delegate from the London Sunday School Union introduced into one of our schools in a village in Shropshire what he considered an improved system of teaching. The improvement consisted in his so instructing one of the teachers as to make him capable of teaching the whole school himself.

Under this one-teacher system the school of ninety scholars rapidly dwindled down to twelve. Bourne learned the facts and was greatly distressed. He visited the school. The old system was restored, prosperity returned, and the school soon rose to be more numerous than before. Upon this illustration he founded an indictment against improvements that tend to weakness and decay.

Bourne was the inventor, it appears, of a new system of forming Sunday Schools that was as simple as it was effective. When the secret is revealed it seems a mystery that it had not occurred to some mind before. To form the classes in a moderate sized school would take two or three Sundays. The plan was to hear each child read separately—if it could read—so as to know how to allocate it, whether to a Bible, a Testament, a spelling, or an alphabet class. One can realise how tedious and wearisome the process was. Bourne, single-handed, with a hundred scholars, was proceeding in this laborious way. Perplexed and baffled, “I looked,” says he, “to the Lord as well as I was able; and through his tender mercy I struck into a new system.” The idea came suddenly, in a flash, and as he believed in answer to prayer. He instantly adopted it, and in an incredibly short time, and nearly before the teachers had arrived, the school was completely formed and ready to proceed with teaching. He just stood up in a given position and said, “All you boys who can read the Bible be so kind as to come and sit down here,” and so on through all the classes, first taking the boys, then the girls. In that simple plan was contained a revolution. Bourne’s words about its origin were emphatic and significant. “And as this system rose by the goodness of God, in our Connexion, without a hint or idea from any other quarter, I have looked upon it as the providential system of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.” So important was the system con-

sidered that the author of it wrote an account of it, which was published in the London Union Sunday School Teachers' Magazine for the profit of all.

His understanding of child-nature was marvellously thorough. He had made a diligent and careful study of the subject for many years, and his knowledge of it was accurate and scientific. His observations upon it were most enlightened and informing. In this regard he had little to learn from the educationalists of his day; they had something to learn from him. The laughing of the children in a service, which so much shocked and scandalised some good people, had no disturbing effect upon him. It was a spiritual phenomenon for which he had a natural explanation, and he defended the culprits against those who charged them with rudeness and ignorance. He saw that children struck with a new, sudden and pleasant sensation vented their pleasure in that way. He had gathered a crowd of children together in the open-air, and was speaking to them, and some of them laughed. A good woman who stood by said, with a look of sorrow and concern, "What a proof of ignorance!" Stopping in his discourse, he enquired, "What is a proof of ignorance?" "Why, to see the children laugh when you talk to them." "No," he replied, "that is a proof that they receive the word with readiness of mind and are pleased with it." The woman was amused with his answer and smiled. Quick as thought he seized upon the incident as evidence of his contention. "Now you laugh," he cried, "and why may not the children laugh as well as you?" He believed there was reverence and religion in their laughter on such occasions. The laughter did not annoy him, but gave his satisfaction. It was interruptions like that of the lady that were an annoyance to him. He would not allow the adult mind to be the standard of juvenile manners and morality, and in the case before us, when

he had finished his conversation with the children and proposed they should kneel in prayer, nearly the whole of them knelt in quietness beneath the evening sky as he pleaded that the benedictions of heaven might flow into their young hearts. Prayer over, they accompanied the singers through the street and flocked into the chapel.

His remarks on the right way of teaching children are full of wise and weighty suggestions. They are abreast of the best thought of our own times and were far in advance of the average thought of his own generation. He wrote instructions to teachers and lectures to ministers, in which he expressed the mature judgment and garnered the ripe experiences of his old age. He was anxious that the information he had gathered "with much expense and many painful labours," should be available to them. The principles he enunciated are being elaborated and enforced to-day in our leading Sunday School Primers and Manuals and by our leading Sunday School authorities. (1) His general rule on teaching was laid down in the following recommendation:—"Teach in the readiest way you can, and the way that is most agreeable to yourself." Exactly! There must be naturalness, ease, originality of manner and style. The individuality of the teacher must not be destroyed by his imitations of someone else. Men rather than mimics are needed in the class room as well as in the pulpit. The copyist somehow or another generally manages to reproduce the defects of the original and to miss the excellences, and the defects are reproduced in an exaggerated form. A teacher's mental and moral constitution and temperament are the apparatus with which he has to do his work. They must be consulted and called into vigorous play. He must keep himself in harmony with himself, must teach in a way that is most natural and comfortable to him. (2) Mr. Bourne advocated short

lessons. Long lessons, like long sermons, were to be shunned as a temptation and a snare. They are a weariness to the flesh and bore the children instead of benefitting them. Short and good is preferable to long and dry. If the children see no end to the journey they leave you to travel the path alone. They pull up, they turn back, or they sit down by the wayside and talk over their latest achievement at marbles, cricket, football, or in the realm of mischievous fun. (3) He recommended variety of exercise. Reading, then spelling, then singing, and so on. Anything to avoid dulness and monotony. Children soon tire of one course, and too much of a good thing is not good. Change of programme is necessary for the maintenance of interest and to keep scholars fresh and lively. (4) "Keep the children much employed." That was another of his maxims, and the soundness of its philosophy is constantly being proved. Motor children you call those of restless energy who are in perpetual motion, whose fingers, feet, heads and tongues are always going; and unless these active striplings are not going right they will be going wrong. The secret of success with them is to have them well and fully engaged. To step out of the ordinary routine to give them some special little task they can perform is a compliment that will please as well as profit them. (5) Another principle he enunciated was that a child must not be puzzled. If the teacher asked a question it could not answer, then the teacher should answer it himself. The teacher should so explain everything as to make it understood, and one of Mr. Bourne's canons was:—If you want children to understand you, you must talk as you talked when you were a child. Approaching the child from the standpoint of the child is the only way to his comprehension and to the kingdom of his mind and will. (6) Mr. Bourne also comprehended the utility of *object* lessons. His action as a teacher was as instructive as his advice on



teaching. His practice was as remarkable as his principles. Towards the end of 1840 and the beginning of 1841 the late Rev. Thomas Barron lived at Bemersley, being employed in the Book Room. Hugh Bourne was then nearly seventy years of age, and on Sundays, when at home, if not engaged in preaching, he taught in the Sunday School. On one of these occasions, when Mr. Barron was present, Hugh Bourne took the alphabet class and gave the children a lesson in spelling. Holding before them his hat, he asked, "What is this?" On the young voices replying a hat, he asked the first in the class to spell "hat." As the little fellow was unable to do so, he told him how—"H-a-t spells 'hat.'"; then he repeated the process with the next boy and with every boy to the last in the class. Other objects were then taken, and the spelling pursued in the same manner to the end of the lesson. "It was interesting," says Mr. Barron, the eye-witness of it all, "to watch the sparkling eyes of the little folks during the continuance of the lesson." It would be interesting, and the eyes of little folks will sparkle when there is anything to sparkle at.

What a strange, romantic, wonderful man Hugh Bourne was. Almost everything about him was unique and extraordinary. As statesman, guide and philosopher he had no compeer among his contemporaries in the Primitive Methodist Church. For practical ideas few educationalists in the country surpassed him. On all things pertaining to Sunday Schools he was specialist and expert. He was Master of Methods and Professor of Pedagogy. He understood and applied some of the principles of child psychology before the modern science of psychology had taken shape, before the facts on which it rests had been classified and reduced to system. In some of his conclusions he anticipated Professor James and Mr. Archibald. He loved little children with a pure, fervent



love, they knew it and felt it, and flocked around him and clung to him. His appeals to them were sometimes dramatic and curious, but most impressive. Baptising a child in North Waltham Chapel, he took it in the pulpit, and holding it up in his arms, said, "Now, my children, send up a prayer for the baby."

His last thoughts were of the children. The Rev. S. Sanders, who frequently visited Mr. Bourne in his final illness, testifies:—"He made many requests that I would not forget the children and the schools." And it was fitting that when this ardent and devoted friend of the little ones was carried to his grave relays of Sunday School scholars should join the cortege and swell the procession in its long, mournful march from Bemersley to Tunstall and from Tunstall to Englesea Brook, where his remains were deposited, awaiting the resurrection of the just.

## BOOK II.

# MATURING PROCESSES.

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### CHAPTER XI.

## A TIME OF TRANSITION.

Twenty Years—Growing Dissatisfaction—A Voice of Protest—Secular Subjects Unnecessary—Christian Character of Teachers—Higher Qualifications Required—*Teachers' Assistant* Issued—Praised Fulfilled an Old Ambition—A Catechism Prepared—*Child's Friend*—Combination—Leeds Teachers' Union—Objects—First Meeting—Conference Address, 1866—Rev. W. Antliff—Important Pronouncement on Sunday School Matters.

WHEN we get near to the sixties we are approaching a period of transition in regard to Sunday Schools in general, and our Sunday Schools in particular. So far as our Schools are concerned that period is pretty clearly defined, and may be said roughly to extend from about 1854 to 1874. Those twenty years, by the best friends of the Schools, witnessed a constant groping and feeling after better things, after substantial reforms and improvements. Their aspirations found utterance, the utterance inspired effort, the effort brought forth fruit, resulting in radical and beneficial changes in the character of the Schools, and the nature of their work, in the very objects they contemplated and the methods and institutions they adopted to achieve them. No sudden, violent revolution passed over the Schools, but quietly and gradually a new spirit was introduced, and practically a new system was created. These changing conditions in the Schools were necessitated by the changing conditions of society. The progressive movements that were

agitating and upheaving Church and State required them. Their wisest supporters saw that the Schools must wake up and move on or else they would be left behind and would forfeit the splendid chances of increasing usefulness that were within their reach.

There had been a growing dissatisfaction for some years with certain features of Sunday School life. In the case of our Church, the leaders had probably been too busy carrying their evangel into the centres of industry and agriculture and into the neglected nooks and corners of the land to give them serious thought. Doubtless they had not escaped the attention of the more observant. But those most likely to perceive and to correct defects were in the forefront of the fiery legions who attacked with unwearied energy and unflagging vehemence "principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places." Still, as early as 1844 a voice was lifted in protest against what were regarded as the negligences and abuses that had crept into the practices of the Schools. There appeared an article in the Magazine, by William Towler, the superintendent minister of Oldham Circuit, under the title of "Sabbath School Evils Corrected." We have referred to some of its positive suggestions in a previous chapter. Mr. Towler was a cultured man. He had an astute and able mind. He made a clever and eloquent use of his pen. His article was well informed and characterised by great logical acumen and spiritual force. He made three principal complaints. (1) It was customary in some Schools not to bring the children into Chapel to hear God's Word or to join in the ordinances of His house. (2) The annual catechetical examination of the children had been generally substituted by "recitals" or "musical festivals." (3) There appeared to be no connecting link between the Church of Christ and many Schools. He reasoned these

points out with considerable elaboration and power of argument. His purpose, as the heading of his article suggests, was not only to criticise, but to correct. He submitted remedies for the evils he exposed. His propositions were stated with fairness and moderation, although he was frank and faithful in the discussion of his themes. His remarks on the recitations of the time prove how objectionable the choice often was. "Some are tragical, some comic, and others absolutely ridiculous." Two or three months were taken to drill the "juvenile performers," and one effect was to inspire "a taste for theatrical amusements."

As time went on these and other points were subject to criticism more and more. The teaching of secular subjects began to appear incongruous as the facilities for education multiplied, and when at last in 1870 the Education Acts were passed that gave being to School Boards and to Board Schools, an epoch was created in the history of social progress, and the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic in Sunday Schools was rendered unnecessary and out of date. But long after the reasons for such teaching had ceased, the teaching remained. It lingered in many instances, cherished with superstitious care. Even as late as 1876, 17,562 spelling books were sold by the Book Room to our Schools.

The Christian character of the teachers was a matter that came by degrees to receive greater insistence and emphasis. When eligible teachers were scarce and secular subjects bulked large in the curriculum, numbers of decent moral people, who were not religious, had been employed. But along with the contention that these schools should be "strictly and entirely religious institutions," that is, "schools for *Christian* instruction," came this other contention also, that those who taught religion should be religious,

that those only could expound Christianity who were loyal in their love to Christ and paid to Him the homage of their hearts. These contentions were just and true. The spiritually minded alone can interpret the spiritual message. To communicate heavenly light and blessings we must live in possession of the heavenly life and in fellowship with the heavenly world. In many quarters the anxiety grew deep that all who in our Schools presumed to tutor the young should themselves have been tutored in the school of the Holy One of Nazareth.

It began to be felt that as scholars were better educated, teachers should be better qualified for their work. Isolated and spasmodic attempts had occasionally been made in this direction from 1840, when at Yarmouth the teachers met on Friday evenings to study together the lesson for the following Sunday. But no general systematic effort had been made to improve the teachers. That some handy, accessible means of improvement should be found for them was a conviction that was widely prevalent among the more intelligent portion of our ministers and members at the particular period of which we are writing. This conviction had been seizing sagacious minds and gathering force, and at the hands of a bold adventurer now and again finding expression for more than a generation. Finally the conviction became so real, vivid and passionate that it produced action. The first-fruit of it may seem a small thing, but it was important as an harbinger and an instalment of the greater things that lay behind it, whose arrival would presently be announced.

The "Teachers' Assistant" was published with the beginning of 1874. It represented the first attempt of our Church to provide the teachers with an opportunity of self-culture, and with suitable materials for the preparation of their lessons. Its full length title was "The Teachers' Assistant

and Bible Class Magazine." Its price was one penny, and the Editor was the Rev. James Macpherson. Its articles were based upon the International Lessons, which were just being issued. On the whole they were good and useful. They were not of equal quality, of course, but some of them were specially illuminative and valuable expositions of the Scriptures under study. They were well calculated to guide and help those for whom they were designed. Reviewers spoke highly of the literary merits, the solid worth and adaptability of the venture. The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon said, "Our Primitive Methodist friends have here provided for them a very excellent assistant in Sabbath School work. The comments upon the lessons are full of pith and suggestiveness. If well studied they will make teachers *real* teachers, which a great many are not. Those who diligently use such helps as these will have something to tell the children, and then the youngsters will be sure to be attentive and show their appreciation of their teacher."

So long ago as 1838 the Conference had resolved, "That a note be put in the printed minutes respecting a periodical for the benefit of our Sunday Schools, the teachers, etc., and that it be about 2d. a number." That is an exact copy of the resolution as it stands in the Minutes of Conference for the year. It would almost certainly originate with that dreamer of dreams and beholder of visions, the venerable Hugh Bourne. But in the multiplicity of his duties, and of his difficulties, he found it impossible to work out the idea into the actualities of history, much to the regret of his brave heart, we may be quite sure. From 1838 to 1874 was a long cry. In the interval the need of such a periodical and the desire for its production had been vividly realised, and when it appeared would be hailed with joy by the teachers who wished to acquit themselves like men.



While supreme concern was being displayed to fit the teachers more adequately for their task, the religious interests and education of the children were receiving attention in other directions. The Jubilee Conference of 1860 decided that a Catechism should be prepared for the Schools and families of the Connexion. The Rev. John Petty was designated the writer. The Catechism appeared in due time. It consisted of two or three parts, and gave a brief survey of Biblical history and of Christian doctrine and ordinances. It had a good sale for several years and a useful career, helping to guide the youthful mind in the way of truth and to instruct it in the knowledge of sacred things. With January, 1865, began the publication of the "Child's Friend," a magazine for the little ones, sold at a halfpenny per copy. In an enlarged and improved form it continues to be published to this day at the same price.

In striving after betterment, the combination of schools and teachers for mutual aid and inspiration was an idea whose advantages our people and other people were rather slow to recognise. "Combines" were not so common in those days as these, and the joining of people together in one association for the attaining of ends in which they were alike interested was much rarer than now. But the idea at length occurred to some of our friends, and they put it into effectual operation. Leeds in this respect has the honour of being first in the field. There were two Circuits in Leeds at the time. The teachers of the Leeds First Circuit formed a "Primitive Methodist Sabbath School Teachers' Union." The account we have of it is over the signature of Alexander McKechnie, who was second minister of the Circuit at the time. The objects were stated to be: (1) To form a plan of speakers, who should be appointed from time to time to visit and address the different schools

within the Union. (2) To promote brotherly feeling among the teachers, by bringing them more frequently in contact with each other. (3) To excite the latent talents of teachers by encouraging habits of composition and public speaking. (4) To suggest better modes of teaching, etc. The first annual meeting was held in Armley Schoolroom, January 2nd, 1858. After tea three subjects were submitted for discussion. Two papers were read, one on "The kind of teaching necessary to render our Sabbath Schools more attractive and efficient," by Mr. G. W. Armitage, the superintendent of Rehoboth School, a capable, far seeing man, and the real author of this advanced movement in Leeds; another on, "Why are there so few conversions in our Sabbath Schools?" by Mr. S. Wright. Half an hour's discussion followed each paper. The third topic, "The necessity of separate religious services for our younger scholars, instead of taking them into Chapel during Divine Service," was introduced in a brief speech by Mr. W. Beckworth, and followed by a short discussion. There was a good attendance, and papers and speeches were excellent. The two papers afterwards appeared in the Magazine. The discussions were well sustained, and the meeting was pervaded with a hopeful, earnest spirit. Before this interesting gathering dispersed it was agreed that the Union should hold half-yearly meetings of a similar character.

There appears to have been a Sunday School Union in the Alston Circuit in 1862. It was probably founded in that year. Mr. Thos. Richardson, one of its representatives, is still living at Ashgill. On the authority of the late Rev. James Macpherson it is stated by Mr. Kendall that the Schools of the four Manchester Circuits in 1869 were formed into a Union which

gradually assumed considerable importance. Possibly at this period other attempts were made at union which were more or less successful, but found no chronicler. These local unions were foregleams of the coming day.

The Conference address of 1866 to the stations was from the standpoint of our story not an unimportant document. It was written by the Rev. William Antliff. It gave prominence to Sunday School matters. The address occupied three pages with questions which were uppermost in the minds of all well-wishers of the Schools at that critical moment, and which summarised the situation in this period of transition. It spoke in favour of teacher preparation, a fixed system of uniform lessons, a weekly teacher's prayer meeting, the bringing of Church members, and especially the more intelligent members, into immediate acquaintance with the Schools, and craved that ministers might "visit, inspect, advise, and aid the Schools regularly and effectively." Reference is made to the "worldly element" in the singing, reciting, and other matters pertaining to anniversaries, school treats, etc. The writer closes his pungent strictures and far-reaching suggestions in these eloquent words, "We rejoice to witness a gradual improvement in these respects, and we hope all who have the management of our Schools will seriously ponder the necessity for honouring God in His house, and guarding against anything that tends to mental and religious dissipation, or to encourage among the young a love for display, for carnal amusements, or for theatrical performances. We may pander too much to a carnal appetite, and be too anxious to attract crowds of mere onlookers, or to secure large collections. There are higher considerations for Christian men and women than merely winning applause, pleasing worldly people, or publishing large collections."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE RISE OF A NEW ORDER.

National Education—The Difference it Made—Concern Excited by the Situation—Pertinent Remarks upon it—A Broad Scheme of Statesmanship Required—A Group of Able Men Lead the Way—Conference Appoints a Committee to Consider the Question of a Union, etc.—Committee Report—Matter Referred Back to Them—Terms of Reference Before Conference Again—Scheme Completed—Described—First Secretary and Committee.

AS we have seen, events were tending towards a new order of things. A new time was dawning, a new set of circumstances emerging that would vitally affect the position of the Churches, particularly with regard to the young. The founding of national education would not ultimately lighten the burden of their labours, but increase the weight and importance of it. Some subjects would of necessity be withdrawn from the survey of the schools, the sphere would in consequence be circumscribed and narrowed. But the quality of the work remaining would be more exacting, as it would be more definitely spiritual, dealing exclusively with the higher things—the things of faith, truth, righteousness, the things pertaining to the conscience, character, destiny, the things that reach down into the depths of this life, and that soar up into the heights of the life that is to come, that compass the unseen and eternal. This finer work would demand men and women with a finer touch, a more delicate and comprehensive sense of moral and spiritual values, and a more intimate knowledge of how to

present the Gospel of Christ to the mind and heart of the child. Henceforth there would be a better class of material upon which thought and care must be expended, at least a class of material in a more advanced state of culture and preparation. It followed that those who were called to manipulate it must be in a more advanced state of culture and preparation, or they would be at a serious discount, the school would lose its grip of the generation, and would utterly fail in its avowed purpose, to overtake the religious needs of the juvenile population.

These things were plain to most people who looked below the surface and understood the drift of the currents. They gave great concern to pious, patriotic minds. There was no lack of warning voices. The alarm bells were rung; they crashed out their terrors. But on the whole the Churches were self-possessed; they faced the difficulties with calmness, dignity and determination. The spirit of prayer and a fervent trust in God steadied them. They knew that the King of Heaven was on their side. They sought wisdom from the courts above. By divine help they believed themselves capable of meeting the emergencies of the occasion and of threading their way to a future of glorious deliverance and of renewed life, fertility and power. There are some pertinent and not altogether despondent notes on the subject in the Conference Address of 1871. Says the writer, "The education question assumes a new aspect and bearing, and imposes upon us increased obligations. In our Sunday Schools we have been obliged to instruct a large proportion of the children committed to our care in the simplest rudiments of education. From all this drudgery our Sunday School teachers will now be released, and their efforts confined exclusively to labours of a purely spiritual kind. We hail the advent of such conditions. But it will be evident



that the machinery of our Sunday School operations must be readjusted and adapted to this altered state of things. Our agency must be of such a character that the necessity of Sunday School labours will be as much felt and as highly appreciated as ever. If, after the educational standard of our scholars is raised, our teachers were found to stand on a lower level, their hold of the children would cease, and our schools dwindle away; and where, were our schools extinct, should we find nurseries for the Church? It will, therefore, be evidently the duty of those who are best qualified for this work to do what they can to improve the teaching capabilities of our Sunday School teachers, and above all to cultivate in them that spiritual power which will make them efficient in bringing the young to Christ."

It became increasingly clear that what was wanted to save the situation was a broad scheme of statesmanship. As far as our schools were concerned such a scheme was presently forthcoming. A small group of able men, chiefly residents in the city of Leeds, were exercised by the problems that confronted the Connexion. They looked at them in their local and Connexional bearing, and the more they examined them, the more they were convinced that the solution of them lay in some large, imperial measure that would apply not merely to a few localities, but to the entire Connexion. Local effort must not be superseded, but stimulated and directed. A central authority must be created, which should have the care of our schools, and from which should radiate the counsels that should guide them. That was the main proposition with which this group of able men grappled. The leader of the group was a layman—a layman who held a high place in the esteem and confidence of all who knew him, who as a man of business, public affairs, philanthropic labours and Christian integrity and usefulness already stood in the front



rank and who since that day has often distinguished himself by the loyal service he has rendered the Primitive Methodist Church and the wider cause of the Christian kingdom. That layman was William Beckworth, whose name is honoured in the households of our Church and whose love to Sunday Schools has been shown by his life-long connection with them. He was the leader of the little band that pressed their convictions upon the Connexion and the Conference.

Yes, the Conference was stirred. It committed itself in a very decisive way to a very great project. It appointed a Committee "to take into consideration the various questions affecting our Sunday Schools, as regards their organisation and management, and the formation of a Connexional Sunday School Union." From such a deliberate step there was no receding. Once a scheme like that was launched, it was bound to be persevered with, to be beaten into shape, made a success. The Committee charged with the undertaking consisted of the following persons:—G. W. Armitage, C. Smith, T. Newell, R. Tanfield, J. F. Pentith, T. Whitehead, J. Beeley, W. Rowe, J. L. Buckley, R. Cheeseman, W. Sissons, G. Hodge, and W. Beckworth, secretary. They were well known men, men of standing and of strength. Six of them were ministers, seven were laymen. Of the ministers, Charles Smith, Thomas Newell and Richard Tanfield were in Leeds. The Committee addressed themselves to their commission during the year with becoming energy and vigilance. At the next Conference they presented their proposals. The Conference thought some part of the work was in a rather crude and nebulous state, and referred it back to the Committee that they might further develop and perfect it. It did this, however, not without giving the Committee encouragement by sanctioning the essentials of their scheme. The following

was the resolution passed on the occasion : " The Conference highly appreciates the labours of the Special Sunday Schools Committee appointed by the Conference of 1871, and tenders to them, and specially to their esteemed secretary, William Beckworth, its thanks for their arduous and valuable services. It also adopts the general principle embodied in their circular, but thinks that the details are not sufficiently matured. Therefore it reappoints the said Committee, and instructs them and the General Committee to prepare, conjointly, legislation on the subject for the consideration of the Conference of 1873. The legislation thus prepared shall be sent to each District Committee, and to the next March Quarterly Meetings of the Stations, for an expression of their opinion thereon. And new Sunday School Committees that may be formed shall be subordinated to our already existing Connexional Courts." Two or three things are evident from that resolution. (1) It is evident that the discussion of the subject had strengthened the feeling that obtained in many parts of the Connexion that further machinery was requisite for the better working of the schools, and so committees were beginning to spring up with that purpose in view, and in the absence of regulations the question had probably arisen as to the authority by which these committees should be controlled and governed. (2) The Conference was in a careful mood. It proceeded cautiously. It did not wish to carry the proposed legislation in a hurry and without due deliberation. Furthermore, the democratic basis of our Church seemed to occur to the Conference, and it decided to consult the representatives of the people as they assembled in District Committees and Quarterly Meetings of the Stations. (3) This obviously and inevitably meant delay. You cannot pursue so cumbrous a plan without inconvenience and waste of time, if the time so consumed be

wasted. The suggestions, alterations, and amendments of between four and five hundred different bodies of men are apt to overlay, smother and kill, the grandest piece of legislation ever devised. But for the declaration of sympathy on the part of the Conference with the legislation, we might have thought that the lurking intention of the Conference was to destroy it. No such suspicion need trouble us. The Conference, by a roundabout method, not unusual in such cases, was seeking to secure that the conclusions reached should be generally acceptable and satisfactory, and such as would form a prudent and permanent settlement of the issues involved.

There is no record of what was done during the year, but at the next Conference, the Committee that had the matter in hand was so changed as to constitute a new Committee, being composed of T. Newell, W. Beckworth, J. F. Pentith, J. Macpherson, S. Antliff, W. B. Leighton, W. E. Parker, J. N. Archer, T. Belcher, H. Binnall, H. J. McCulloch, and R. Smith as its Secretary. It had to forward the result of its deliberations to the various District Committees, and thereafter to the Conference of 1874, the Quarterly Meetings of the Stations being this time dropped out of the reference.

Accordingly the scheme was completed, finally submitted to the Conference of 1874, and accepted, becoming the law of the Church. As passed, it comprised sixty-nine paragraphs, and occupied six pages of the Conference Minutes. It was one of the most potent and promising pieces of legislation ever placed upon the statute book of our Church. At a stroke it created the Primitive Methodist Sunday School Union, with its General Committee, Secretary, and Fund, and it comprehended and covered nearly every conceivable point in the life and work of the schools, as relating to officers, teachers, teachers' meetings, aims, lessons,

accounts, requisites, and statistics. The scheme was carefully wrought out down to the most minute detail. Many additions have been made to it at different times, and some alterations inserted in it, but practically it erected the constitution and fixed the order that exist among us to-day.

The objects of the Union cannot be better stated than in the words of its second annual report in 1876. Those objects were stated with some fulness of detail, and the whole matter was summed up thus :—" To benefit the schools in every possible way—in their equipment and management, and their work and productiveness—to incorporate them more fully with our various Connexional Institutions, and weld them into vital union with the Church, sharing in her life and affording a principal field for her activity." A word of caution was uttered to the over-sanguine, and the virtue of patience shown to be necessary. For the report continues :—" It must not be expected that all these purposes will be accomplished at once, and that all the advantages we propose will be reaped in a day ; it may take years fully to complete our organisation, mature our schemes, and bring the schools into the possession of all the benefits we aim at. Let there be time for ploughing, sowing, and growing, and then look for the harvest."

The first Secretary of the Union was the Rev. Joseph Wood. He was appointed by the Conference that created the Union. But he was called the *agent* of the Sunday School Union. He had to act as Secretary to the Sunday School Committee, " keep its books and record its minutes." The title of secretary, however, was quite a subordinate one, the emphasis being laid upon his title and capacity as *Agent*. That word *Agent*, considering its commercial associations, seemed to be very much out of place in this connection. It was too suggestive of bales of cotton, bundles

of yarn, varieties of ware, of buying and selling and bargaining, but it survived until 1894, when the Conference abolished it.

The Committee of the Union was to consist of twenty representatives, one from each District of the Connexion, of which there were twelve, the others to be elected on account of residence near to the places of meeting. All members of the Committee had to be chosen because they possessed special qualifications for the position. The Committee was appointed to meet quarterly at Derby, Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, in succession.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION AT WORK

Secretary Entirely Set Apart for Union Work—Circuit Sunday School Unions Formed—Their Objects—Catechumen Classes Established—District Sunday School Committees Appear—Band of Hope Union—Purposes—Pledge—Returns—Temperance Society—Appliances—International Lessons List—Rewards—Schedules—New Hymn Book—Schools Entering the Union—Objections—Advantages of Union—Committee and its Business—Warm Times—Committee and Book Room—A Sunday School Newspaper Projected—Project Failed—Effect of Discussions.

THE first meeting of the Sunday School Union Committee was held at Derby on August 18th, 1874, with Robinson Cheeseman in the chair. The Committee soon settled down to its work in earnest. It found plenty to do, its hands were full, its Secretary was the busiest man on earth. We must be remembered that he was not liberated from the responsibilities of superintending a Circuit. But it was found to be impossible for him to do the work of his office and attend to the duties of a Circuit minister, and on the initiative of the Committee the next Conference set him apart entirely to meet the calls and claims of his department. In other directions the Committee proceeded to complete the revolution that the Conference of 1874 had begun. Upon the foundations then laid it started boldly to build. Much was necessary to finish the structure, line upon line, law upon law, but steadily through the course of years it assumed its more perfect form and came to be what it is.

The Conference that saw the Secretary separated from Circuit obligations, saw also the establishment of Circuit Sunday School Unions. The objects of these Unions were



defined to be:—(1) To promote intercourse amongst the officers and teachers of the Sunday Schools in Circuits. (2) To circulate information as to the best manner of conducting schools, and the most approved appliances and methods of instruction. (3) To record instances of usefulness and success, and especially to stimulate teachers to seek larger spiritual results from their labours. (4) To extend Primitive Methodism by means of its schools, to encourage the Connexional element in the character and working of them, and to adopt the best means to secure the conversion of the scholars and their permanent membership in our Church.

Catechumen Classes were established in 1877. They were to be formed in all cases where practicable for juvenile members, and the exercises were to be of a varied and profitable character and adapted to the capacities of the members. Care was enjoined in the selection of suitable persons as leaders, the office deserving "the best piety and talent of the Church." All under fourteen years of age who met in these classes or in other classes were to be reported as catechumen members. Everything possible was done by the Union to make these classes a success, and to give those who belonged to them the truest culture in spiritual experiences and ideals, and to impress them with the loftiness and sanctity of the Christian vocation. Suggestions as to the best methods of conducting the meetings were provided for the leaders. A beautiful pictorial admission card, suitable for framing, containing rules, space for name, date of entrance, and other information was prepared, and a "Catechumen's Guide," a small manual of sixteen pages, for juvenile members, full of "helps and hints" for their religious life, as well as rules for their membership was published.

Two years later, in 1879, the Committee of the Union obtained the passage through Conference of proposals that resulted in founding the District Sunday School Committees. They were designed to link up the schools more completely with the Union, to assist in promoting measures for improving organisation, and for securing better spiritual results, to arrange for aggregate meetings of teachers, to receive and examine the yearly report of the schools, tabulate the statistics, and forward them to headquarters. The introduction of these Committees was a good thing in every way. They created an authority that could keep in touch with the schools on the one hand and the General Sunday School Committee on the other, and form a natural medium of communication between them, that would understand local conditions, show sympathy on the spot with those who had to struggle with adverse and unfriendly circumstances, and generally exert itself to quicken and extend interest in the youth of our Church. They have abundantly justified their existence. Some of them have a specially honourable record for enterprise and efficiency. Their influence has not only been felt in crowded cities and big towns, but their fostering care has encouraged poor and feeble folk in remote villages and in obscure hamlets. Centred in them are the most alive elements of our community. Their magnificent annual conventions for teachers and school friends are gatherings of which we may be proud.

Another important movement successfully negotiated by the Union at the Conference of 1879 was the establishment of our Band of Hope Union. That word "union" was not used. It came into play at a later time; but though not expressed it was implied. For the first time our Bands of Hope were furnished with a constitution and brought under "Connexional supervision." Henceforth the Sunday School

Union took them under its wing, nurtured and protected them, and encouraged their growth and multiplication everywhere. After stating that the primary object of the Band of Hope Institution was "to train the young in the principles and practice of sobriety, and particularly in habits of abstinence from intoxicating liquors," the collateral objects were defined as the regular attendance of our scholars at the means of grace, their avoidance of public-houses and other dangerous places, the inculcation of the minor moralities, industry, cleanliness, kindness, etc., the discouragement of the practice of smoking and snuff taking, and all bad and offensive habits, and the supplying of such information and literature as would be likely to counteract all evil influences. Any child who was capable of understanding the pledge was eligible for membership, and those Band of Hope Committees that clearly saw their way to admit the threefold pledge, namely, to abstain from all alcoholic liquors, tobacco, and snuff, were at liberty to do so. And that threefold pledge down to recent years was the most popular with many of our Bands of Hope. Snuff taking is not a very extensive habit in our generation; there is little danger of it among children. Could snuff have been taken out of the pledge and gambling substituted, then in our opinion the threefold pledge might still have been popular in many places. Provision was made for the return of Band of Hope members, and from 1880, when they were first reported, to 1885, they leaped up from 38,774 to 92,512, an increase for the five years of 53,738. In chronicling these successes, well might the report say with a glow of satisfaction and a tone of triumph, as in 1884, "We are exceedingly pleased to note that the Temperance sentiment from year to year becomes more and more intense and ardent."

It is interesting to observe that formally the Primitive

Methodist Temperance Society and Band of Hope Union were established in 1883. Although the scheme was broadly that which since 1879 had controlled the Bands of Hope, the direction and rules for the forming and regulation of branches of the Temperance Society were not very clear and satisfactory. However, the matter of these branches, which it was hoped to found in connection with all our congregations where practicable, was lifted into public view by this official recognition, and the Temperance Society, as well as the Band of Hope Union, was placed under the auspices of the General Committee of the Sunday School Union.

Not only were the activities of the Committee engaged in perfecting machinery, but also in supplying the schools with more modern and up-to-date appliances. It published the International Lessons List. In 1875, 7,000 copies were sold; in 1876, 30,000, and the number continued to increase year by year, as did the number of schools which used the International Lesson system. By the end of 1882, 1,640 schools had adopted it. Requisites of all kinds, of the best style and quality and as cheaply as could be produced elsewhere were placed on the market. A better class of books for rewards, libraries, and teachers was secured and was extensively advertised and made known. Schedules were issued for the annual returns that became in process of time interesting works of art. Fact after fact was required to be stated; column after column was added to the documents, until those schedules were as elaborate and accurate as the most complicated and scientific table of Government returns, and would delight the heart that has a passion for statistics and loves to revel in a grand array of figures.

A new Hymn Book for the schools was published in 1879. Its compilers were Dr. George Booth, J.P., of Chesterfield, and William Beckworth, Esq., of Leeds. Their valuable

services in connection with its compilation and the preparation of the Tune Book that followed a year or two later were specially recognised and acknowledged. Men better qualified for the work it would have been difficult to choose. The book contained four hundred and fifty hymns, and no pains were spared to make the selection one of the best. The Book Room authorities, in their first report after it had been issued, expressed their joy at saying it was winning "golden opinions"; and when it was accompanied by the tunes, the same authority declared that it "has met with an enthusiastic reception from those most able to judge of its high excellence as a musical production, as well as of its striking adaptation for use in our Sabbath Schools. It will also, no doubt, become a great favourite in the homes of our people, and be much used, as a book of chants by the choirs of our great congregations, and will very fitly displace many of those ephemeral and threadbare productions which have long expended both their force and interest." That eulogy of its merits was sustained by the popular demand for it. Its sales rose at once to over sixty thousand a year. It served also for twenty-one years, when it gave place to our present Sunday School Hymnal and Hymnal Tune Book, which are admittedly a possession of unsurpassed excellence.

The Union took part in the celebration of the Centenary of Sunday Schools in 1880, and attempted to raise in connection with it a special fund to assist the objects of the Union. Many of the Circuits and Schools held Centenary Conventions or Demonstrations, but the special fund was not a special success. A few contributions were made to it, but no great sum was collected.

The Secretary and Committee laboured hard to induce the Schools to enter the Union. Nor did they labour in vain. For by the end of 1881, out of 3,674 schools, 2,732 had



joined. The allegiance of some was not very steady. They would join, and then seeing no immediate and pecuniary benefit come to them, they would withdraw. All sorts of objections were raised in some quarters against joining—mostly of a small and selfish kind. Not infrequently the objection betrayed the ignorance or the denominational indifference and disloyalty of the objector. To encourage them to enter, liberal library grants were made to schools in the Union, and special grants to teachers in schools belonging to the Union, such schools also getting on their rewards and requisites a twenty-five per cent. discount, while those not belonging to the Union only received twenty per cent. on these purchases.

The kind of objections raised to joining the Union, may be inferred from some negative reasons given for joining, in the Report of 1876. (1) It is not intended that the Committee shall authoritatively interfere with the internal working or in any way control the funds of any connected school. (2) The Committee cannot dictate uniformity of management to affiliated schools. (3) It is not proposed to withdraw our schools from any other Union they may be associated with, and which they may consider beneficial to them; but we shall offer them equal and superior advantages to those they derive from any similar institution. (4) By joining the schools will come under no restrictions they are free from while standing aloof. (5) As it is not compulsory to join, so it will not be to continue joined, etc.

An able article appeared in the Sunday School Report of 1881, and was repeated in the Report of 1882, on "What are the advantages of the Union?" It expressed surprise that there were schools which still asked the question, and proceeded to answer it by the following half-dozen propositions which it argued and sustained with great fulness and



force of statement. (1) The Union has brought the interests of the schools more prominently before the Connexion. (2) Set more clearly before the teachers and the Connexion the nature and end of Sunday School work. (3) Brought the teachers into closer association, and created a fellowship amongst them for mutual counsel and benefit. (4) Originated much useful legislation, and established institutions that cannot fail to be beneficial to the schools. (5) Published a set of requisites which will bear favourable comparison with those supplied by any other house and issued them on the most advantageous terms. (6) Made many grants of books to needy schools, assisted in the establishment of many new schools, and supplied books to teachers at fifty per cent. discount. The article admitted that all the affiliated schools had not received grants of greater monetary value than the subscriptions they had paid. The Union was to be worked, it continued, on the principle of the strong helping the weak, and teachers were exhorted to take a broad connexional view of the Institution, and think of those benefits which are of far greater value than mere material gain.

The loftier aims, the healthier tone, the deeper religiousness of the schools had resulted from the labours so freely bestowed upon them. They had not only better literature and apparatus, but truer conceptions of their work, and were immensely more spiritual and powerful through the action and advocacy of the Union and its Secretary.

The Committee gave close and keen attention to business. At the beginning of the second year of its existence it appointed an Executive, to meet monthly at Leeds. Its duties at first seemed to have been confined to dealing with grants and the appointments of the Secretary. The Committee had some warm and lively times occasionally. There were heated discussions about the direlection of duty on the

part of the Book Room, the Book Steward, and the Editor. There were sharp passages of arms between the Committee and these eminent authorities. Some of the combatants appeared to scent the battle afar off. They were eager for the fray, and when Greek meets Greek and one brave warrior measures swords with another, the interest becomes absorbing. When doughty champions like Joseph Wood on the one hand, and John Dickinson or James Macpherson on the other confronted each other in conflict, spectators were pretty sure to see a fight to the finish. It was a battle of giants. These good men were not engaged in bitter personal quarrels. They disputed on things about which they differed, each wishing the matter in dispute to be settled in his own way.

Some of their misunderstandings arose perhaps through the frontiers of their several spheres not being clearly and scientifically defined. The School Committee was new, and it would require some little time for it to take its bearing. Probably London thought Leeds a little aggressive. It did look at one stage, as though the Committee would annex the Publishing House, or that portion of its business which related to the schools. It asked the Book Room for an estimate of its stock in the school department that it might take it over, and requested Conference to let it do the trade without keeping stock, getting supplies to schools direct from the publishing firms. And it received a fair amount of the profits from this department for one year. For in its balance-sheet for 1876 was the sum of £240 10s. profits on requisites, etc. No such haul, we believe, ever came to its net again. It had to be content with that solitary and temporary triumph. But the fact that the Committee enriched its coffers for once from that source speaks volumes for its perseverance, courage, and skill. The Committee tried to get into its own hands the Editorship of the "Teachers'

Assistant," as the organ of the Union, and submitted the proposal to Conference, but suffered disappointment and defeat. The Magazine was continued in the hands of the Connexional Editor.

Another of the Committee's noble dreams was equally futile. When beaten on the Editorship of the "Teachers' Assistant," it was not at all disposed to let the real point at issue drop. It introduced the subject in another and still bolder form. It decided in November, 1878, that an organ of communication between the Committee and the Schools was indispensable, and that it should adopt means for the establishment of such an organ, under its own control, direction and responsibility. Three months afterwards the substance of this resolution took shape. It was decided that the organ of communication should be a newspaper for Sunday Schools, the size of the American "Sunday School Times," but with fewer pages, the paper to be issued monthly. As a start ten thousand copies were to be printed. The title of the paper was left for future consideration, but the editors were appointed, the honour falling upon the Rev. S. Parkin and the Secretary. The Book Committee had to be approached on the subject, and as the fly in the ointment, the Book Committee did not agree. Not only, we imagine, did they not agree, but they would most likely be very strongly opposed to the project, for by it they would see the sale of their own periodicals threatened. Notwithstanding this adverse verdict, the School Committee stuck to its guns, and as a last, desperate attempt to bring their obstinate friends (or enemies) of the Book Committee into line it asked the Conference to appoint a small committee, including the Editor and Book Steward, to meet during the sittings of Conference, if practicable, to consider the matter and decide upon it.

We judge the suggested Committee was never appointed.

There is no record or trace of it. So that if it was appointed nothing came of it. Nothing daunted, the School Committee at its first meeting after Conference, in August, 1879, re-affirmed its resolution to issue the paper, fixed the price at a penny, altered the plan of a monthly publication to a weekly one, though it was to be done up in monthly parts to accommodate persons who might desire to have it in that form. The title of the paper was to be, "The Primitive Methodist Sunday School Times, being an organ of the Connexional Union, and Band of Hope Advocate." The Rev. J. Wood was requested to be Editor, and the Executive were asked to consider in what way they could render him assistance in that capacity. Things had to be hurried up that the first issue of the paper might appear with the new year. That looked like business at last, and expectations in well-informed circles would run high. Still the cruel fates were against it, and the project that was so dear to the hearts of its promoters was finally abandoned in the following resolution passed by the Committee in November:—"That as there appears to be too many difficulties in the way of starting a weekly paper for our Schools and Bands of Hope, the morning lessons in the "Teachers' Assistant" be abbreviated for the purpose of affording additional space for articles on Sunday School work, eight pages at least to be appropriated, which will leave four pages for morning lessons and sixteen for the International and illustrations." In that resolution lay dead and buried, beyond the possibility of a resurrection in that generation, or perhaps in this or the next, the prospect of a Sunday School paper for our Church.

Now it must not be thought that the energy spent upon these lost causes was wasted. Though the endeavours failed in the immediate objects they contemplated, in the long run they succeeded. They won moral victories. Through the

discussions that took place upon them they let the authorities and leaders of the Church know that they had to reckon with this new power that had arisen among them, and that they would have to reckon with it in a fair, straight forward way. It would not be trifled with. Henceforth the children and the schools had a champion that would utter, defend and push their claims with determination, and would demand and obtain for them just and generous treatment.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

Competitive Examinations—Teacher Training—Examinations made Separate Department—Secretaries—Triennial Conferences—Their Constitution, Work, and Usefulness—Morse Lecture—Bible and Prayer Union—Who was its Founder?—First Secretary—His Heroism—Its Continued Prosperity—First Institute in the Kingdom—Christian Endeavour Society—Secretaries—Branches of its Work—Its Growth—Temperance Society and Band of Hope Union made Separate Department—Secretaries—Reform Needed—Anti-Cigarette League, 1905—Its Secretary—Its Advance—Young People's Missionary Department—Reform of Sunday School Teaching—Dr. Peake—Conference—Special Committee—Scheme Prepared—Sanctioned—Approved by Important Conference of Free Churchmen—More Detailed Scheme Drawn Up—Accepted by International Lessons Committee—Finances.

**I**N the unfolding of the plans and purposes of the Union, one event has followed upon the heels of another, in a rapid and almost bewildering succession. The "*rest and be thankful*" policy finds no place in the history of the Union. No doubt there has been thankfulness, but no rest. There has been a constant outflow of energy and a perpetual realisation of progress.

The annual Competitive Examinations were introduced in 1886. As regards the Scholars' Examination, it has always been based upon the Scriptures, the passages selected being taken from the International Lessons for the year, except in 1909, when, as the Church was celebrating its Centenary, it was felt to be appropriate that the subject for examination should be the history of Primitive Methodism. A special history was written for the occasion in three sections, adapted to the three divisions of scholars—junior, middle and senior.

The Teachers' Examinations have covered a range of

subjects designed to fit them for an intelligent and efficient discharge of their high and solemn duties. They have included such topics as Church History, the Principles and Art of Teaching, the Teachings of Jesus, etc. A three years' course has been arranged and successful candidates are presented with a special certificate of merit. At the Conference of 1911 the nature and scope of the examinations were revised and fixed upon fresh foundations. They were made more thorough and scientific. They were brought into close touch with the results of recent studies in child psychology, and with the latest proposals of leading pedagogists. They were linked up, with a suggested system of teacher training, which, if accepted and put into general operation, will create a beneficent and glorious revolution in our Schools. Provision was made for pupils who are preparing to be teachers, and for elementary and advanced classes. Altogether the scheme is of first-rate importance, and places us in the front line of Sunday School reformers. The Rev. John Swinden has been made the Secretary of the Teacher Training Department. In him it will have a sympathetic and able pioneer.

The examinations were made into a separate department in 1902. The choice of a secretary fell upon Mr. John Kendall, of Blackburn. Mr. Kendall was an old member of the Sunday School Committee. He was a Sunday School teacher of long standing, stood high in the esteem of those who knew him, as an ingenious and indefatigable worker. He had been President of the Blackburn Sunday School Union. Mr. Kendall devoted himself with energy and intelligence to the toils imposed upon him by his office. He sought to make the examinations successful, not merely from the standpoint of the members who took them, but in the good effects they produced in the minds and characters of the candidates, the life and efficiency of the Schools.

After five years Mr. Kendall was succeeded by Mr. F. E. Gray, of Sheffield, a most painstaking and strenuous worker. In his own town Mr. Gray was highly respected, and by the members of the General Sunday School Committee, and by all who knew his worth, he was greatly beloved. He was an enlightened, conscientious man. He lived for the little ones. He brought a well disciplined mind to his work. The details and drudgery of the labour connected with the Examinations were part of the service and sacrifice he so cheerfully rendered to his Master. In the midst of his manifold toils, he was smitten with fatal illness, and after two years' tenure of office was called home to join the ranks of the redeemed who stand before the throne.

The Rev. German Hunt, who at present holds the office, followed Mr. Gray. Mr. Hunt is well known for his skill and care as an organiser, his complete and comprehensive methods as a secretary, his sound judgment, and safe leadership in all matters of business. He is a splendid all-round man. Prompt, prudent, sagacious, far-seeing. A more level-headed and capable man it would be difficult to find. He gives himself freely to his duties. He handles affairs thoroughly down to the last and the least detail. Nothing that ought to have attention escapes the observation of his eye. Mr. Hunt aims at excellency of workmanship and results. He has introduced many improvements into the conduct of his department. Under his punctual and genial management, the examinations are growing in popularity and power.

The Triennial Conferences were established in 1889. They are composed of duly elected representatives from all the Districts, ministerial and lay, who must be chosen because of their active interest in Sunday School work, or their intense sympathy with the

young life of our Churches. In them have gathered from the first many of our most prominent and capable leaders and Sunday School men and women. Papers have been read on timely themes, and discussions have been held with far-reaching effects. The first of the series was held at Higher Ardwick Church, Manchester, and subsequent conferences have visited the following cities and towns :—Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, Birmingham, Leicester, Oldham, and Derby. By means of them have been advocated and achieved many useful reforms. They have steadily grown in influence and importance. The Morse Lecture, founded by L. L. Morse, Esq., J.P., of Swindon, Wilts, has taken its place as one of the most attractive items of the programme. The first was delivered in 1907 by Rev. T. H. Hunt on "Sunday School Reform, a Problem for the Times." This Parliament of our Schools has in it the promise of still greater good, and is likely to exercise its wholesome and helpful ministry among us for long years to come. Is it necessary to say that it has no legislative function? Its authority is moral, not legal. It cannot command. It persuades, suggests, inspires, guides. It exalts the ideal, pictures the goal. It offers the counsel, speaks the word of wisdom and experience. Those who listen find their feet treading the "more excellent way."

The Bible Reading and Prayer Union is another branch of our Sunday School Union's activity. It was launched with the year 1889. It provides brief daily readings of the Scriptures, designed to illumine the International Lessons. It issues short, pithy, explanatory hints on the selected passages, and a quarterly address to the members by the Secretary. Its aim is to strengthen and perfect Christian life by encouraging the habits of Bible study and prayer. The "hints" for the first year were written by the Rev. J.

Ferguson, the secretary of Sunday School Union. But after that year arrangements were made with the International Bible Reading Association for the supply of their readings and hints. Those arrangements continue. Some little doubt and uncertainty as to who was the founder of the Bible and Prayer Union exists in some quarters. Mr. Kendall, in his *History of our Church*, expresses the belief that the honour belongs to the Rev. Luke Stafford; and it is stated in a sketch of Mr. Stafford that appeared in the *Aldersgate Magazine*, that the Rev. J. Ferguson assigned the position to him. On the other hand the evidences in favour of the late Mr. J. W. Hives, of Leeds, appear irresistible, from (1) his official connection with the Bible and Prayer Union, (2) the references to him at the time of his death in the documents and reports of the Sunday School Union as the founder, and (3) the clear, unhesitating testimony of witnesses who were closely connected with the proceedings of the Sunday School Union at the time when the Bible and Prayer Union was commenced, and who were in a position to know all the facts of the case.

The claims of Mr. Stafford seem to rest on the fact that he was the originator of a Prayer Company—afterwards called a Prayer Union—and on the supposition that in some way or another this organisation led to the other. The attempt to secure a circle of friends, who would devote a certain portion of time every day to praying for a revival of religion in the Church was a most worthy and honourable one. It displayed a fine spirit of Christian earnestness and courage. Had the spiritual passion that prompted it been more widely shared it would have been better for our Churches. But the effort was an entirely private and personal one, and it is regrettable that it did not become more influential and successful. In a circular issued in 1883, Mr. Stafford stated



that the company was formed in 1880, and that 168 persons had entered it from time to time, while in a circular issued in 1887, he said that there were then in the Union "36 ministers, 17 laymen, and 4 sisters." Mr. Stafford, we believe, was never a member of the General Sunday School Committee, and when in April, 1887, it referred the question of a Bible and Prayer Union to the Executive, with definite instruction to proceed to the formation of such a Union, his name was not added, although the names of the Revs. A. Ward and W. A. Eyre were added, Mr. Ward not being a member of the General Sunday School Committee. Mr. Ward evidently took a conspicuous part in the business, and was subsequently thanked for his services. Was it possible that Mr. Stafford's Prayer Union suggested the idea of prayer being associated with the habit of Bible reading in the Union whose origin we are discussing? If so, then in a real sense Mr. Stafford's soul passed into the movement, and he had ample compensation for all his pains.

Mr. Hives was Secretary of the International Bible Reading Association for the Sunday School Union of Leeds, and Mr. Beckworth, T. H. Hunt and D. Sheen assert that the suggestion that a Primitive Methodist Bible and Prayer Union should be started came from him in the first instance. He was a member of the General Sunday School Committee and of the sub-committee appointed, as we have shown, to put the scheme into shape. He was the first Secretary of the Union, and so carefully and thoroughly did he lay his plans and pioneer the enterprise, that in the first year of its existence the Union was able to report 374 branches and 15,826 members.

Mr. Hives remained in charge as secretary until his death in June, 1898. When health was declining and he was physically weak and feeble, he remained bravely at his post.

On the announcement one day in the Executive Committee that though his strength was fading, he was courageously clinging to duty, the Chairman, Mr. John Harrison, said with emotion and emphasis, "He is a hero." So he was. A hero in the cause of Christ and the children. He was anxious to see the Union reach a membership of fifty thousand, and his heart was full of projects by which he hoped to celebrate that gracious event. When he wrote his last report in the April before he died, there were 49,060, and there is no doubt that the goal of his ambition had been passed and the fifty thousand members secured before his promotion to the higher service.

The Bible and Prayer Union has continued to prosper. The Rev. D. Sheen became the Secretary after Mr. Hives' death for a year. He was followed by the Rev. S. S. Henshaw for a couple of years. Since June, 1901, the Rev. J. Johnson, of London, has held the office, displaying in it great aptitude and energy. At the Conference of 1910 there were 2,115 branches and 91,110 members.

We believe that the honour of starting the first Sunday School Institute in the kingdom belongs to Primitive Methodism. It was associated with John Street School, Sheffield. It was the ultimate product of a determined movement begun in January, 1881, to introduce order, discipline, reverence and efficient study among the senior classes. Suitable subjects were chosen, scholars read papers upon them, discussion followed, and the session closed with an address from the teacher. The movement grew in importance and strength. The upper classes were crowded. It became inconvenient and impossible for the young men and women to meet at the ordinary opening services of the school. A sub-committee was appointed in 1884 to consider the best steps to be taken under the circumstances. Their recom-

mendations were bold and drastic. They recommended (1) that all scholars over fourteen years of age should meet in a section to themselves, to be called an Institute; (2) that in this section the terms president and member should be substituted for teacher and scholar; (3) that the section should nominate its own superintendent, secretary, and committee of management; (4) that each class in the section should have a secretary, as well as a president; (5) that its president and officers should meet in the monthly and yearly Teachers' Meetings, so that all the sections of the School should form a united whole, and be under the same management; (6) that a room should be set apart for the members of the Institute on week-days, to be open every evening from six to ten for reading and writing. Daily and weekly papers were to be supplied, and a Reference Library formed to assist pupils in writing their papers.

These recommendations would probably have a startling effect on some minds. Still they were accepted. What is more, they were developed. Fortunately a splendid suite of rooms was built to accommodate the Institute. It grew famous and mighty. By and bye all sections of the School numbered nine hundred scholars, and fifty-six per cent. of them were members of the Institute. Visitors came to see the Institute, to learn its history, and to examine its methods on the spot. It naturally found favour with the General Sunday School Committee, and in the yearly report for 1889 they recommend the formation of Institutes on the lines and after the model of that at John Street, Sheffield.

The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour was formed in 1896, and its Central Council is the General Sunday School Committee. For a few years feeling had been growing in favour of the movement. Other Churches were adopting it, or similar organisations, and our own friends

in various places were also making it a part of their equipment. At first the Primitive Methodist pledge differed considerably from the international one, but in 1902 it was decided to adopt the International Pledge and Constitution. One of the distinguishing features of the movement among us is that the Weekly Endeavour Meeting is regarded as a Class Meeting, its president as a Class Leader, and all active members are Church members. Twelve months after its establishment, Rev. G. Bennett was appointed Secretary, a position he held for nine years, giving unceasing attention to the advocacy of its principles and aims, the formation of new Societies, and the linking up of our Societies with the International movement, through affiliation with the National Council of Great Britain and Ireland. The Endeavourers have shown themselves capable of generous things. They have nobly responded to great appeals. Under the direction of Mr. Bennett they raised nearly £1,000 for the founding of the Training Institute at Oron, South Nigeria.

The General Sunday School Committee agreed at its Spring Meeting, 1904, that the principle of the "five years' term" should be recognised in future in all the secretaryships of the Union. The termination to Mr. Bennett's period of office was fixed at the same time for 1907. As, however, he had in that year to take up the duties of the General Secretary of the Union, and had most important work on hand, he retired in 1905, Rev. William Spedding being elected to succeed him. Everybody felt that a wise choice had been made. Mr. Spedding for years had been an eloquent champion of Endeavourism and an unsparing worker in its behalf. He was a frequent speaker on its platforms. He had expounded its genesis and genius in a book that received the high commendations of competent authorities, and that was graced and eulogised by a preface

from the pen of Rev. F. E. Clarke, D.D., the revered father and founder of the Endeavour movement. Mr. Spedding had also contributed to our own newspapers and periodicals, and to other newspapers and periodicals, many racy articles on the subject of Endeavour. For five years he filled his office most admirably, advancing its varied interests, visiting the Districts of the Connexion to address, counsel and encourage the friends, always leading the way to the higher and richer things of God, and making every part of the organisation of his department proficient and vigorous.

Mr. Spedding has been followed by one of our rising ministers of the North of England, the Rev. Charles Humble. In lowlier positions Mr. Humble has already won his spurs, and this conferential appointment will afford him a wider sphere and an ampler opportunity of service for his Church.

In connection with the Christian Endeavour Society, several branches of work for the benefit of the young people—literary, recreative, religious—have been inaugurated. It has a Reading Union, conducted with great literary taste and intellectual power by Rev. P. McPhail in the *Springtime*, which is its recognised organ. One of its most popular institutions is the Holiday Tour. The tours are home and continental. The home tours are held annually, the Continental tours are occasional. The home ones have been held in Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Channel Isles, and in some of the finest heath and pleasure resorts in England, including Buxton, Harrogate, and the Lakes. Much of the routine and drudgery of the arrangements for these tours have fallen upon Mr. Arthur Lax, the Treasurer, and Revs. G. G. Martindale and C. Humble, Secretaries, under the supervision and guidance of the General Christian Endeavour Secretary. On the promotion of Mr. Humble,



the Rev. G. T. Fawcett was elected in his place. The Central Council issues a yearly handbook of considerable value to its members, the circulation of which approaches thirty thousand copies.

We are able to trace the growth of the Endeavour movement among us by a rapid glance at the annual returns. At the Conference of 1897 there were 587 Christian Endeavour Societies, with 14,138 active and 5,787 associate members. Three years later the statistics were 1,221 societies, with 31,656 active and 10,025 associate members, a total membership in both sections of 41,681. In 1905, 2,022 societies were reported, 56,643 active members and 15,084 associates. In the next five years, we find that the flowing tide is still with us, for there was reported to the Conference of 1910 at Tunstall the following remarkable set of figures:—2,309 senior societies, 60,994 active members, and 14,757 associates. In the meantime Intermediate and Junior sections had been formed, the Intermediate department reporting 43 societies, with 1,020 members; while the Junior returns showed 1,273 societies, with 44,586 members. The figures for the three sections—Senior, Intermediate, Junior—reach the grand total of 3,625 societies, and 121,357 members. May we not appropriately close our review of the Christian Endeavour department in the words of its report to the Conference: “For these results we desire to most profoundly thank Almighty God.”

The Temperance Society and Band of Hope Union became a separate department of the Union's work in 1897, when the Rev. T. H. Hunt was appointed Secretary. Mr. Hunt held the office for nine years, with great distinction, representing the Union on the Executive bodies of all the important national temperance organisations, frequently being selected a speaker at large representative gatherings.

Whether in private counsel, business meeting, or public advocacy his services were exceedingly valuable. His masterly grasp of every phase of the temperance question, and his ability to state his views in eloquent and convincing speech, and marshal his arguments with skill and force, caused him to be everywhere welcomed by his friends and dreaded by his foes.

Mr. Hunt was succeeded in 1906 by the Rev. H. O. H. Richardson, who entered the office full of noble dreams, some of which, however, he did not live to translate into deeds. After a little over two years, his promising career was suddenly cut short by death. The Master called the young, enthusiastic servant home to the ministries of the heavenly land, amid the profound sorrow and tears of a vast multitude of friends and admirers. He died on the 11th February, 1908.

At the request of the General Sunday School Committee, Mr. Hunt stepped into the fallen leader's place, until the Conference of 1909, when the Rev. J. Pearce was elected to the post. A preacher and speaker of considerable fame and power, Mr. Pearce's appointment was hailed with satisfaction in all parts of the Connexion. He brought to his new tasks experience and energy, a genial disposition and a courageous spirit. We have now in 1910, 2,250 Bands of Hope, with 157,721 members, 434 adult Temperance Societies, with 17,189 members, while in our Schools are 287,738 juvenile and 132,713 adult abstainers. The adult abstainers include not only teachers, but scholars who are above fourteen years of age. In the Temperance department there are some problems awaiting solution. By a few simple reforms it may be possible more accurately to gauge the temperance sentiment and strength of our Schools, and Churches, and to give to the world a truer and fuller con-

ception of our real position with regard to this vital matter.

The Anti-Cigarette League was founded in 1905, with Rev. W. M. Kelley as Secretary. Its members promise by the help of God not to smoke tobacco in any form until they are at least twenty-one years of age. Mr. Kelley was just the man to lead the movement. He had genuine sympathy with boys and was anxious to see them live a pure, unselfish life, free from all habits and indulgences likely to injure their health, influence, usefulness and manhood. He had already interested himself in this very work in the city of Leeds; whole-heartedly he pushed and promoted the objects of the League. So well has he succeeded, that the League has now about thirty thousand members.

Conjointly with the General Missionary Committee, the Union was responsible for the creation at the Conference of 1906 of the Young People's Missionary Department. At first it was managed by a joint committee representing the General Missionary and the General Sunday Schools Committees. More recently it has been placed more directly under the management of the General Sunday School Committee. The Rev. S. S. Henshaw was appointed Secretary in 1907. The department deals with African Missions alone, and is designed to spread missionary information and create missionary interest and enthusiasm among the young people of our Sunday Schools and Endeavour Societies. Every School is considered to be a branch of the department, which elects a missionary secretary, appoints missionary collectors, and fosters the missionary spirit in its scholars. The department issues a quarterly Missionary Message to the schools for gratuitous distribution among the children. Two hundred thousand copies per quarter of the Message are published. A total of two million copies have been disseminated. For the year

1911-12 the department is organising a special effort on behalf of the Mission Fund. It is hoped to raise an average of at least one penny per scholar, and threepence per teacher, beyond the ordinary missionary income of the scholars.

Our Sunday School Union has played a distinct and honourable part in securing an improvement of immense significance and importance in the curriculum of the world's Sunday Schools. From the pen of A. S. Peake, D.D., there appeared in the columns of the *Primitive Methodist Leader*, in the latter part of 1905, nine articles on "The Reform of Sunday School Teaching." They made a severe attack on the system of lessons provided by the International Lessons Committee. The lessons were criticised as "snippety," disconnected, unsystematic, unsuitable for some sections of the schools for which they were prepared, and as leaving large important portions of the Scriptures untouched. A more rational, consecutive and comprehensive method of teaching the Bible was demanded. The articles created a profound impression. Revised and extended, they appeared in book form, exciting widespread interest and discussion.

Before the appearance of Dr. Peake's articles, a movement towards reform had been made. During the discussion of the Sunday School Union Report at the Scarborough Conference, June, 1905, the following resolution was passed:—"That it be an instruction to the General Sunday School Committee to consider the reform of Sunday School teaching and methods, and the need of denominational teaching, and to consult the tutors of the Theological Institute and the Book Committee thereon, with a view to practical suggestions." At its first meeting after the Conference, the Executive of the Sunday School Union appointed a sub-

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committee to consider the steps to be taken, with regard to this resolution. The Committee consisted of G. Bennett, T. H. Hunt, W. Spedding, C. Humble, E. Dalton, J. Harrison, A. Lax, J. Kendall and S. S. Henshaw, Convener. The Committee met at Leeds, September 29th, and agreed that in order to give effect to the recommendations of the Conference resolution, it should desire the tutors of the College, Manchester, and the Book Committee to appoint representatives to meet them that they might confer together on the subjects mentioned in the resolution. The Book Committee appointed W. Beckworth, J.P., to join the Committee, and the representatives elected by the College staff were Dr. Peake and Professor A. L. Humphries, M.A. The first meeting of this Special and United Committee was held at Leeds on November 17th. Subsequently it met several times, and carefully drafted an elaborate scheme of graded lessons which embraced all the sections of the Sunday School—Junior, Intermediate, Advanced.

The scheme was received and sanctioned by the General Sunday School Committee, and the Annual Conference of 1906. The Conference, in sanctioning the scheme, recommended it to the Committee that they might seek the co-operation of other Sunday School Unions or representative authorities, and suggest such steps as they might deem wise for the practical development of it. The Special Committee that had charge of the scheme, in harmony with the desire thus expressed by the Conference, called a Conference of the leading scholars and Sunday School men of all the Free Churches in the country.

The Conference of these distinguished representatives was held at the Memorial Hall, London, December 6th, 1906. They met at the invitation and as the guests of this Union. It was an impressive gathering, a gathering of Biblical and



Sunday School experts. Every Evangelical Free Church was represented, as also the International Lessons Committee and the Old Bailey S.S. Union. They were met by Dr. Peake, Professor Humphries, G. Bennett, W. Beckworth, E. C. Rawlings, and S. S. Henshaw. The scheme was submitted to them in an illuminative address by Dr. Peake, and it was freely discussed. As the result of the discussion, three resolutions were unanimously passed. In these resolutions the Conference (1) expressed its sympathy with the purpose and its general approval of the principles of the scheme of instruction submitted to its consideration; (2) it desired that the scheme of instruction should be forwarded to the International Lessons Committee. It also urged upon that committee the desirability of preparing and issuing a system of graded lessons that should meet the requirements of the modern situation and recognise the practical suggestions made by such schemes as the one under review. (3) The Conference requested the Primitive Methodist Special Committee to continue its labours, prepare a more detailed scheme of lessons, and present it to an adjourned meeting of the Conference. Our representatives cheerfully agreed to this course.

The work of preparing the detailed scheme was left by the Special Committee with Dr. Peake and Professor Humphries. The execution of their commission was delayed by pressure of work. But the adjourned conference met at the Memorial Hall, June 6th, 1907. It expressed its general and hearty approval of the scheme that was now presented, appointed a committee to consider the details of it, map out the lessons, and complete the outline. That committee, however, never met. There was no need for it to meet. All that was desired had been accomplished. For the International Lessons Committee elected Dr. Peake as a member

of their body, accepted the suggestions that had been made, and appointed Dr. Peake to prepare the outline of lessons on the Old Testament in the new and improved series of International Lessons to be introduced in 1912. We may therefore claim to have played a conspicuous and successful part in reforming the curriculum of the Sunday School, and in bringing it into accord with the requirements of modern science and Biblical culture.

The finances of the Sunday School Union have fluctuated considerably. Sometimes the exchequer has been in a flourishing condition, sometimes it has been embarrassed, bankrupt. A simple reform insured it a regular and steady income. By a master stroke of genius, all the Schools were legislated into the Union, and required to pay the fees, the scale being one shilling for every fifty or fraction of fifty scholars. This course had been recommended by the Sunderland District Sunday School Committee many years before it was adopted. A few grumbled at the regulation, and offered a pious protest against it, but on the whole the Schools accepted the regulation quite loyally and cheerfully, and have honoured it with remarkable unanimity. The Union has also created new assets in its Annual Report and Scholars' Letter. From these sources it has derived a substantial addition to its revenue, and though its varied agencies and operations are costly, it has managed at the audit, of late years, to have a balance on the right side.

## CHAPTER XV.

# THE MAKERS OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

Greatest of all, Rev. J. Wood—Superintendent Preacher and Secretary—Set Apart—The Man and His Work—Another Type—Thomas Whittaker—Joseph Ferguson—Thomas Hankey Hunt—Danzey Sheen—S. S. Henshaw—George Bennett—William Beckworth, First Treasurer—John Harrison, Present Treasurer—George Booth, Musical Director—Others.

**M**ANY hands, hearts and brains have been employed in the erection of the Union. It is only the chief actors, however, that can be mentioned. Amongst these must come first in order the men who have occupied the Secretarial office of the Union, and upon whom has rested in a large degree the responsibility of constructing its policy and conducting its business.

And first of all, and greatest of all in this connection, is Joseph Wood, the first secretary. He entered the office at the beginning of 1874 and retained it until 1882, a stretch of eight years—three years longer than any of his successors. It was decided by the Conference of 1877 that as in the case of other Connexional officers, the General Sunday School Secretary's office should be five years. But Mr. Wood's term of five years was to reckon from the Conference that passed the legislation. The first year Mr. Wood held the office, you will remember, he was also a Circuit minister. "We shall never forget that year," he says in his last report. "It was then that the initiatory work of the Union was done. Letters in connection with it were pouring in upon us at the rate of twenty or thirty, and

sometimes more, per day. To attend to them and our Circuit duties as well, it was necessary, night after night, to be at work until the small hours of the morning, and sometimes almost till daylight did appear." All the secretaries of the Union have had a strenuous time of it, but not one of them has had nearly so strenuous a time as Joseph Wood. They found the machinery ready to hand, and in working order, but he, with his coadjutors, had to erect the machinery and lay down the plant. And they did it, and they did it well. Mr. Wood was a man of marvellous ability, as a preacher and speaker, as an organiser and administrator. He was a man of boundless energy and enthusiasm, a little impulsive sometimes, of strong will and fiery determination. When he made up his mind on a certain course it was difficult to change him, not that he was stupid, but that he was moved by deep convictions; and he was mostly right in the steps he advised. He was wise in counsel. His ideas were in advance of many of his contemporaries in the Church, and this brought him into collision with them, or it brought them into collision with him. In debate he could hold his own against the cleverest opponents, and it was seldom he came off second best. He had a fund of rich, rare humour which was helpful to him. He was an ardent Methodist. He was an ungrudging worker, passionately devoted to duty. He had a true and tender love for the children, and into those eight years of toil in their behalf and in behalf of the teachers and the schools, he put without reserve or restraint all the great capabilities of intellect and eloquence that he possessed. The Union owes more to him than to any other man.

He was followed by a man of another order and type. Indeed each man in this succession differs from every other

man in it. Each man is marked off from the rest by a more or less strong and striking individuality, and by his own peculiar gifts and habits of thought and work. Thomas Whittaker—1882-1887—was a kindly, genial man. He bubbled over with joyous heartiness and good will. Bulky in form, he was bright in disposition. Wherever he went he carried a gleam of sunshine. He smiled the young folk into the kingdom of God. How down he was on the pipe, as well as on the glass. He hit hard blows at tobacco and drink. How fervent he was! Who that heard him talk to the child could ever forget it? We heard him discourse one Sunday afternoon to a crowded audience of youngsters on the plan of salvation. We can remember some of the things he said to-day, and remember also the vigour, aptness and power with which he said them.

Joseph Ferguson—1887-1892—was the next in order, and was of another order altogether. Bold, dashing, aggressive, fluent and mighty of speech. In pulpit and on platform disclosing remarkable gifts of oratory, his discourses sweeping along like a torrent or a flood. He had the popular element, and was in great demand. He could impress and uplift his audiences. He was a fighter when fighting was necessary, ready to take up cudgels and defend a position. In a high degree he had the power of attracting and inspiring young men, and through his magnetic influence many were drawn to Christ, and landed in the ministry or in some other useful sphere of Christian activity.

Thos. Hankey Hunt—1892-1897—a man with an enormous capacity for hard work, an astute diplomatist, an incorrigible wit, taking high rank among the Temperance Reformers of our land and time. His brain a reservoir of ideas which he has the knack of throwing into practical shape and of developing at the right moment. Amazing his friends by



his extraordinary vitality. After half a century in the ministry, and notwithstanding his persistent application to mental pursuits and onerous tasks, looking fresh and robust, one of the youngest and the merriest of a young and merry company. He has the pen of a ready writer, and as scribe, author, and organiser has rendered valuable service to all the interests and institutions that cluster about Union and School.

Danzy Sheen—1897-1902—the fervid children's Evangelist, aiming with directness and success at the conversion of the young. Courteous, affable, the embodiment of amiability and kindness. A man of peace, afraid to strike lest he should wound. Receiving a blow without returning it. Spiritually minded, living and walking in the heights with God, breathing the air of the upper world. Modest and unassuming. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Samuel S. Henshaw—1902-1907—in labours more abundant. Travelling over seventy thousand miles during his five years of office in the work of the Union. Serving the little ones with gladness. The yoke easy, the burden light, because borne in such an exalted and delightful cause. Appreciating with deep and fervent gratitude the confidence, sympathy and co-operation of his brethren on the General Sunday School Committee and throughout the whole Church.

Our present Secretary, George Bennett, electric to the finger tips. Sarcastic at times, and withering in his ridicule and scorn. Expressing himself by a look, a gesture, that is often more eloquent and effective than tons and tons of argument and logic. Making you laugh because he does not laugh. Going straight to the heart and core of a business. Demanding thoroughness; building from the bottom and

putting in sound material right to the top. Seeing a clear course when others are groping and fumbling and stumbling about in the dark. Busy himself to the last atom of his strength, a past master in the art of keeping those busy about him.

William Beckworth, J.P., was the first Treasurer of the Union. For although the late James Whitaker, Esq., of Helmshore, Lancashire, was requested to take the position, he did not accede to the request. Mr. Beckworth was elected to the office in 1875, and retained it down to the Conference of 1892, a term of seventeen years. Through all those years he was intimately associated with the proceedings and progress of the Union. He was one of its most zealous and faithful advisers and friends. He was one of the pilots who helped to steady and steer it, through the perils of its early course, and to send it forth with much anxiety and many prayers on its prosperous voyage. Though Mr. Beckworth has remained a member of the General Sunday School Committee, he has not for some years been in the habit of attending its meetings. But he has kept up his connection with the institutions with which it is identified, having for many years taught a large adult Bible Class at Belle Vue Road Church, Leeds.

John Harrison, J.P., has been Treasurer of the Union since 1892. Superintendent of a large school at Armley for long years, and when Town Clerk of Leeds a teacher of our Belle Vue School, delighting in his class of boys. Original and enlightened in his ideas and methods. Encouraging the boys to write in turn a review of the lesson and read it to the class. Lending them books from his own library to enable them to prepare their little essays. The task not made too formidable, but kept strictly within easy limits—just a five minutes' effort or so. Compliments,

rewards, and fatherly counsels being bestowed upon the young essayists for their stimulus and edification in the Lord. Thus he cultured and trained the minds of the boys, developed the piety and extended the knowledge of his class. He is not only Treasurer of the Union, but a working member of the Committee. Wise, kind, generous, brotherly, a big-souled man, a devout, humble Christian, a strong, tenacious Primitive Methodist. Evangelistic, the passion and joy of his life to see souls converted unto God. News of a religious revival is the sweetest message that ever reaches him. A hater of shams, his human emotions have never been choked with the conventionalities and affectations of society. Amazingly able, a shrewd man of business, placing his professional knowledge and experience entirely at the disposal of the Union, guiding it through difficult places with a skilful hand. Doing the work of Treasurer at considerable inconvenience and expense to himself, but without the least expense and with infinite advantage to us.

George Booth, M.D., J.P., of Chesterfield, must be regarded as the Musical Director of the Union. In the creation of two Hymnals and Hymnal Tune Books—the one produced in 1879, the other in 1899—he played a commanding and magnificent part. The excellence of the Hymns and Tunes must in no small measure be traced to the breadth and soundness of his culture and choice. The supreme quality of the work sprang from the supreme quality of the worker. Dr. Booth not only understood the art of music, and the genius of true poetry, but he understood the child, and the youth. In his superintendency of the Holywell Cross Sunday School, Chesterfield, he had acquired a rare knowledge of the young. He could judge with infallible instinct the hymns that were best adapted to them, that would most naturally and effectively appeal to them, and interpret their

spiritual aspirations and needs. He was a great gift to us. The songs and music, provided at great cost of time and labour, have helped very materially to secure purity, reverence and heartiness of worship in our Schools.

In a more or less degree all the sectional secretaries of the Union may be regarded as makers of the Union, as may also many men who at one period or another have been members of its General Committee and Executive, and who have contributed by their labours and suggestions to the perfecting of its organisation, the extension of its influence, and the achievement of its purposes.

## CHAPTER XVI.

# THE STALWARTS OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Makers of Church and Nation—L. L. Morse—His Youthful Connection—Sunday Programme—Public Man—Excellent Wife—J. Sweeper—Unique Position—District Secretary—Treasurer—Champion Village Schools—Unparalleled Case—D. Bagnall and W. Ancott—Honoured—Usefulness—Elijah Jennings—Teachers of Boys—Superintendent—Missions—Crowded School—Henry Beales—Reformer—Benefactor—His Talks to Lads—His Supremacy in School—His Society Class—His Funeral—Thomas Hales—Writer of School Hymns—G. T. Snowden—His Influence and Power—Representative Names—Female Teachers—Mary Ray—Perambulator—Mrs. Potter—Other Examples—The Final Roll of Honour.

THERE are thousands of men and women in Primitive Methodism who, through sunshine and storm, have stood by our Schools, who have counted loss gain, pain pleasure, reproach honour, that they might further the Kingdom of God among the little ones. If the story of their faithful, heroic service and self-sacrifice could be written, it would fill volumes. It would furnish a library of religious adventure, simple and beautiful devotion, unselfish and impressive incidents, and episodes that would astonish the world. We can only give a few examples of this glorious race of stalwarts. There are multitudes more who might with equal justice be mentioned, if they were known to us, or if the limitations of space did not preclude the possibility of naming them. If the men of the last chapter made the Union, the people with whom we deal in this chapter are the makers of the Church and nation. They quarry and polish the stones that build the temple of the Lord.



The propriety of opening our list with the name of L. L. Morse, J.P., of Swindon, will be generally acknowledged. To him we owe the Lectureship in connection with which our present Lecture appears. He was born, and spent his early life at the village of Stratton, near Swindon, Wilts. As boy, youth, man he has been closely identified with our Church. While yet very young, he became organist of his place of worship, a position he filled for fourteen years. His intelligence, strong and steady character, glowing piety, denominational loyalty, his attachment to the house of God, amiable disposition, courteous bearing, earnest evangelism, marked him for high place among his people. He was soon made Class Leader, and teacher of the young men's Bible Class, which at one time embraced as many as sixty young men, quite a number of whom felt in their souls the throbbings of the spiritual life. He had a full programme every Sunday. To that programme he gave himself with all his heart and mind. 7 a.m., prayer meeting; 9.0, Society class; 9.30, Sunday School; 10.30, Public Worship; 2.15, School; 5.0, open-air Mission or choir practice; 6.0, Public Worship. The round of engagements came to a close with the Prayer Meeting after evening service. Removing from his native village into Swindon, Mr. Morse joined the Regent Street Sunday School. For some years he was its Superintendent. Subsequently he presided over a large Bible Class. In whatever capacity he has acted with regard to Church, Municipality, or State, whether as Vice-President of the Primitive Methodist Conference, Mayor of his town, Magistrate or Member of Parliament, he has ever exerted himself on behalf of a happy, educated, virtuous youth. Though his health does not permit him to indulge the activities of former years, his heart is still with the children, and one of the happiest events of the year for him and Mrs. Morse—a kind, hospitable

lady, who lives in the esteem and affection of the people, and has worthily supported her husband in all his labours—is the annual treat of the Regent Street Sunday School. Several hundreds of scholars, teachers and friends are on that occasion received and entertained by them at their residence, “The Croft,” and within its beautiful grounds. The day yields immense satisfaction and delight to host, hostess and guests alike.

We pass to another Wiltshire worthy, Joseph Sweeper, of Purton. He has been identified with the Sunday School since his connection with the Church began in 1855. For some years he was Superintendent of Wroughton School, and for twenty years superintendent of Purton School. He has the unique distinction of being the oldest working member of the General Sunday School Committee, having joined it in 1877, and continued a member of it without intermission to the present time. He has been elected by the free and hearty vote of the brethren of his District to represent them year after year. His case stands alone in our annals. There is not another like it. For fifteen consecutive years he was the Sunday School Secretary of the Brinkworth and Swindon District, and during the whole of that period he raised the working expenses of the Committee himself, never troubling the treasurer for a shilling. Since quitting the secretaryship, he has been the Sunday School Treasurer of the District, and has still raised the expenses, never troubling the Secretary for a shilling. Mr. Sweeper has attended all the Triennial Conferences except the last one at Derby, when urgent professional duties kept him away. At two or three of these Conferences he read papers on “Village Sunday Schools.” At district and local Sunday School Conventions, he has often been heard on subjects affecting the work of the teacher and the welfare of the

school. His ideas are enlightened and advanced. Though a veteran of considerably over three score years and ten, he is surprisingly alert and active, and goes to School every Sunday when he has not a preaching appointment.

We question whether the following remarkable record can be equalled in the story of the Sunday Schools throughout the world. For over sixty years David Bagnall and William Ancott have been co-superintendents of Lea Brook School, Tipton Circuit. Both men are venerated by those who serve under their leadership, and have received many tokens of regard from the hands of their fellow citizens. Mr. Bagnall was for nearly thirty years a member of the old School Board of Wednesbury, the town in which he resides, and was for three years County Councillor. Mr. Ancott has been made Justice of the Peace, and in his office as Secretary of the Ironworkers' Association has commanded the respect of masters as well as workmen throughout industrial England. The Revs. W. and S. Mincher were boys in Lea Brook School, and out of it came also into the ministry Mr. Bagnall's two sons, the Revs. E. J. T. and W. Bagnall, his daughter and son-in-law, the Rev. G. T. and Mrs. Turberfield, and the Rev. D. Harding, missionary in China.

Elijah Jennings, of Leicester, is known to all Primitive Methodists as a notable Sunday School man. Immediately on his conversion in 1857 he took a boys' class in the Sunday School, and although he has been a popular local preacher for fifty years, his school record is one of exceptional distinction and brilliancy. He and Mr. Clucas formed a young men's class at St. Nicholas Street. Mr. Jennings held the presidency of this class for many years. He possessed the art of enthusing the young fellows with his own mind and zeal. From their ranks were drafted many of the best local preachers and ministers of the calibre and

quality of the Revs. John Mayles, our old friend of Fernando Po fame, Jabez Bell, and H. G. Meecham, B.A. The missionary fervour of the class was kindled into a high and holy flame. Campaigns on behalf of African Missions were conducted in town and country. Mr. Jennings has been superintendent for over forty years, first in St. Nicholas Street, then, when it was sold for town improvements, at Hinckley Road Church, which took its place. His superintendency has been an unqualified and marvellous success. Chiefly through the fascinating personality and power of Mr. Jennings a mighty School of nearly a thousand scholars has been built up. At certain periods numbers of children who applied for admission have had to be refused, because of the crowded state of the rooms. Everything about superintendent and school is modern, and the atmosphere is charged with intense human interest and sympathy, with divine influence and benediction. For years Mr. Jennings has written a letter to every scholar on his or her birthday.

The late Henry Beales, of Moss Lane, Manchester, impressed the city as few of its citizens have done. Coming up to the great Cottonopolis from an East Anglican village with his parents when a boy, he became the ruling spirit in one of the best and largest schools in the country and one of the mightiest moral reformers in that vast centre of population and industry. He was the life and soul of many movements designed to reach and redeem the poor, lost urchins of the slums. Strong, tender, with a loving child-like nature, he had a divine passion and genius for work among the young. He won their confidence, evoked their enthusiasm. The roughest lads learned to love and trust him. They felt instinctively that he was their friend. How his talks captured them! On one occasion the Free Trade Hall was packed with an audience of them gathered from

the lowest quarters of the city. Eminent persons put up to speak could not manage them, and had to sit down beaten. When Mr. Beales sprang to his feet, they received him with uproarious cheers. He had them in hand in a moment. Every word went home, and on taking his seat they made the rafters ring with rounds and rounds of applause. His supremacy in his own School, where he had been for forty years, was complete. The way he marshalled and swayed those masses of children, addressed them, led them in prayer and song, and cast upon them the spell of his own reverent, Christly spirit, was extraordinary. Scores and hundreds of them were drawn into fellowship with the Saviour through him. They took him as their ideal. In his Wednesday evening class, to forty, fifty and sixty young men and women, he would pour forth the secret treasures of his soul, and from that class went forth ministers like the Revs. S. Horton and W. M. Kelley, and men and women to form Christian homes, and to adorn the doctrines of godliness in their business, professional and philanthropic pursuits. His funeral was like the tribute to a king. Scores of ministers were present, including Canon Hicks from the Cathedral, Rev. S. F. Collier of the Wesleyan Central Mission, and Dr. Goodrich, the Nestor of Manchester Congregationalism. City Councillors, Magistrates, doctors, lawyers were there, and the streets were lined with thousands of stricken, tearful people who wished to do honour to the dead. No part of the community lamented more sincerely or deeply his passing, after the teachers and scholars of Moss Lane Sunday School, than the newsboys, the Shoe-black Brigades, etc., of the city.

A Primitive Methodist poet and Sunday School hymnist was Thomas Hales, the superintendent of Ellesmere Port



School for a long important term. He has been dead for nearly twenty years, but his works do follow him. It was his custom each year to write a hymn for the School Anniversary. In this way came from his pen such popular productions and favourites with both children and adults as "Sabbath Schools are England's Glory," "When Mothers of Salem," "I'll away to the Sabbath School," and "Till Jesus Calls us Home." The humble authorship of these hymns was never suspected by many who were familiar with them.

G. T. Snowden was for more than half a century a leading Sunday School figure in the North of England. He was, through several generations of children, the superintendent of Old Nelson Street, the mother church of Primitive Methodism in Newcastle and the neighbourhood of the Tyne. To the last he kept in living touch with the active phases and the latest developments of Sunday School life and work. As an agent of the Newcastle and District Sunday School Union he helped to permeate the Schools of the city and its adjoining towns and villages with the noblest ideals, to increase their spiritual tone and tendencies, and to concentrate their energies upon the higher achievement of winning the young for Christ. A host of men and women who passed under his care in their younger days acknowledged their indebtedness to him.

Space fails us to tell of such grand men as W. B. Leighton, Ballast Hills; J. Hewitson, Central Church, Newcastle; T. Gow, of the same city; William Carr, Gateshead; Henry Pringle, Chester-le-Street; R. Pickering, G. Holland, E. H. Brown, Sunderland; W. Glass, Wingate; C. H. Leach, Darlaston; — Hamphlett, Bishop Auckland; Mark Harrison, Hartlepool; George Hodge, J. F. Pentith, Jabez Day, and John Beal, Hull; D. Railston, Driffield; J. L. Hopwood,

J.P., Scarborough; Thomas Smith, J. Benson, Robert Moss, J. J. Webster, J. Topliss, Sheffield; William Dann and Amos Smith, Whittington Moor, Chesterfield; R. and T. Fletcher, Silsden; J. Brierley, J.P., Halifax; W. McNeill, J.P., Crewe; Thomas Waite, Reading; Jesse Gelthrow, Thomas Hodge, Luton; J. B. Stather, E. C. Rawlings, W. Tarver, J.P., W. J. Haysom, London; C. Gaskin, Long Eaton; T. Garrett and H. Mosley, Derby; Watkinson Brothers, Grimsby; T. W. Broughton, Cleethorpes; J. Broadbury, J. Bell, Lincoln; W. Vernon, J. P. Beresford, and G. F. Adams, Chester; B. Swanwick, J.P., Seacombe; R. Bell, Yarmouth; William Batterbee, Dersingham, Norfolk; John Williamson, Docking; G. Brown, J.P., Thetford; Joseph Cotterell, Thomas Phillips, R. Lees, Darlaston; A. Lax, Leeds, and D. Driver, Keighley, who for a long time were auditors of the Union. Some of these men have been called home; the majority of them are with us still.

Many of them have to their account as Sunday School workers thirty, forty, fifty and sixty years of service. It has been their privilege to rear ministers, missionaries, church officials, and those who have taken part in local and imperial government, and have on the broad platform of public life fought the battles of progress and peace. They are only given as samples of the race of stalwarts to which they belong, and because they happen in most cases to be known to the writer.

The good women of Primitive Methodism have invariably taken a large share of responsibility in relation to the Sunday School. The sisterhood of our Church has always been well represented on the staff of its teachers. Of its 59,338 teachers to-day, 36,891 are male and 22,447 are female. And the women have not been a whit behind the men in their devotion and integrity. We heard of a lady near

ninety years of age, at Kingswood, Bristol, who when able took her young women's class in the school. In Norfolk we met a lady, the wife of a labourer or small farmer, if we remember correctly, who in the village where she lived, gathered a class of rough youths in her house and in process of time had the joy of seeing them all become Christians.

Mary Ray, as a young married woman, settled with her husband in the village of Farnborough, Hampshire. There being no Primitive Methodism in the village, she trudged off every Sunday morning to the village of Hawley, Basingstoke Circuit, two and a half miles away, starting at nine o'clock that she might arrive by ten, in time to open the school, for she was the superintendent. She took dinner and tea with her, after awhile pushing the perambulator with two children in it, and a third walking by her side. This trudge and labour continued for twelve years, then by the efforts of her husband, who was a local preacher, and herself, land was bought, and a chapel erected, in their own village, in 1866. Here a School was started, with Mrs. Ray as a chief factor in it, and when we were in the locality in 1903 she was still connected with it. At the time of our visit her sister, Mrs. Potter, had also been superintendent of the School at the village of Fleet for forty-three years. She prepared and gave the International Lesson Sunday after Sunday. In her young married days she would take her infant child along with her to school, and lay it on a pillow while she taught. From the distant lands of Australia and America she received letters from old scholars to inform her of their prosperity, and to thank her for the instruction and guidance she gave them in the little village school. A tablet in Traffic Street Sunday School, Derby, records the fact that Mrs. M. A. Billinge was a consistent and devoted teacher of the School for a period of fifty-four years. As

the infirmities of age crept on, she stuck to her post, and when she died in 1910 many women who had passed through her class could testify to the excellent and abiding effects of her teaching and example upon their character and life. Miss Barker, of Chesterfield, is well known as a Sunday School specialist. She and her co-superintendent, Mrs. Wright, are a type of the ever-increasing band of trained and certificated day school teachers who are found in our Sunday Schools, doing magnificent service for the coming generations. Scores and hundreds of teachers, of both sex, whose names we are unable to place in our list of stalwarts, stand on the roll of honour in the sky. Their record is on high. Their names are in the Book of Life. Their Lord welcomes them into the celestial order of merit. He confers upon them long and distinguished service diplomas. He decorates them with medals and crowns them with laurels that never fade, and compared with which the most coveted decorations and prizes of kings and conquerors are as tinsel, iron and brass. The gold and diamonds of the eternal kingdom will glitter on their heads.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW.

Present makes Future—One Generation Lives for Another—Principle Complexions Our Story—Resulted in Prosperity—Statistics of Several Decades—Spiritual Forces—Decreases—Position To-day—Grand Future—Divine Presence—Our Duty—A Mighty Morrow.

THE yesterdays of our history have made the to-days. The to-days will make the to-morrows. The present receives its heritage from the past. The future will receive its heritage from the present. One generation lives for another; at least that is the essential principle of all good living. It is an axiom of the Christian faith, the soul-stirring motive of the Christian Church. It has inspired the philanthropies of the world, given us our heroes, produced those grand struggles for right and freedom, for moral and social betterment which are the admiration of the sincere and noble-minded of every land. This principle highly complexions the story we have told in the preceding pages. It operated supremely in the lives of our predecessors. And it operates supremely in the lives of many of our contemporaries. The spirit of the Master shines in the heart of the servant.

The whole-hearted devotion we have chronicled resulted in periods of abounding prosperity. The army marched from strength to strength, from victory to victory, increasing in numbers and the extent and glory of its achievements as it advanced. The years brought a procession of signal triumphs. At the celebration of the Connexion's Jubilee in 1860, there were 2,036 Sunday Schools, 30,988 teachers, and 167,533 scholars. In 1874, when the Sunday School Union was formed, the position was so vastly improved that 3,536 schools were reported, 49,887 teachers, 306,333 scholars. In 1880 there were 4,046 schools, 58,371 teachers, and 372,570



scholars. The decade ending with 1890 witnessed equally satisfactory results, the statistics being 4,234 schools, 61,727 teachers, and 431,868 scholars.

In the returns for 1900 are omitted the schools from the Australian Colonies and New Zealand. South Australia had already joined the United Methodist Church of Australia, and the other Australian Districts shortly followed the example. And although the New Zealand Churches are still under our Conference, for various reasons the custom arose of publishing in our Sunday School Report only the figures relating to the Home Districts. On these accounts 334 schools, 3,119 teachers, and 28,043 scholars disappeared from our returns, which had hitherto been included. It ought also to be noted that in the early eighties our Churches in Canada helped to form the United Methodist Church of Canada, causing hundreds of schools and thousands of scholars to be dropped from our report. But notwithstanding the deduction of the Australian and New Zealand Schools, it will be seen that there was an actual increase of scholars during the decade, the figures being 4,005 schools, 57,706 teachers, and 439,137 scholars. In the next ten years we stepped forward gloriously, for at the Conference of 1910 we were able to say that our Schools now number 4,176, with 59,338 teachers and 463,821 scholars. These are striking figures, symbolic of the subtle, spiritual forces which no statistics can tabulate or express, but which cover wide, almost boundless areas of human life, changing and elevating the manners and customs of the people, hallowing their homes and habits, and turning their laws into instruments of justice, equity and truth.

For the last two or three years, in common with other Churches, we have been compelled to report decreases in the number of our teachers and scholars. Into the probable causes of these decreases we cannot now enter, but we are persuaded that they are transitory, and will shortly pass

away, or at any rate lose their power to disturb and check the onward flow of our work. There is no need for us to be unduly depressed or pessimistic. The conditions of success are within our reach. There are signs on every hand of awakened interest in the young. The position to-day is immeasurably in advance of what it was thirty or forty years ago. In 1877, for instance, not quite 4 per cent. of our scholars were Church members; to-day 17 per cent. of them are members. That is far from satisfactory, but it is an immense improvement. We are retaining a larger number of our elder scholars than formerly, 25 per cent. of the whole being over fourteen years of age. We are building better schools—graded schools—with more ample and suitable accommodation. We are reconstructing our Primary Departments, and settling them on lines beautifully adapted to the infants. Everywhere attempts are being made to master the problems that confront us.

We may take heart. Happier times are in store for us. Our Schools have a grand future before them. God is with us. Difficulties vanish from His presence. His hand works miracles. He smiles upon the wilderness and it blossoms as the rose. He clothes the desert with bloom, the barren spots with fruitfulness. Let us be worthy of our high calling as the ministers of God to the children. Let us teach the truth of the Gospel. Let us magnify and exalt the cross. Let us breathe in our words and exemplify in our conduct the spirit of the Christ, and there shall swing round to us seasons of overflowing blessing. The joy of the Lord shall be our strength. The scholars of our Schools, the youth of our land shall dwell in uprightness. Integrity shall preserve them. They shall walk in purity and faith before the Lord. The morrow of our cause will be unspeakably glorious and mighty. It will eclipse by its conquests the records of yesterday or of to-day.











